

SingleThread Is Opening a Restaurant in Kyoto — Here's What to Expect

Here's what to expect at SoNoMa inside the forthcoming Capella Kyoto.

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Credit: Getty Images

For the last decade, husband-and-wife duo Kyle and Katina Connaughton have been bringing a bit of Japan to Northern California with their critically acclaimed, three-Michelin-starred [SingleThread](#) restaurant. In the heart of Healdsburg, the multi-course, multi-hour kaiseki-style menu showcases the best of the Bay Area's bounty, with much of the produce procured from their own farm just a few minutes away. Come this spring, they'll be flipping the script and bringing California to [Kyoto](#) with the opening of an intimate, 12-seat restaurant, lounge, and pastry shop in Japan.

Dubbed SoNoMa by SingleThread, the new concept will open on the ground floor of the forthcoming 89-room [Capella hotel](#) in Kyoto's historic Miyagawa-cho district in early March. The name has a two-fold meaning: First, Healdsburg is literally located in Sonoma County, of course; and secondly, in Japanese *so* refers to "thought" or "idea" while *ma* refers to "pause" or "between," and the concepts are connected by the possessive *no*. Stitched together the name could be interpreted as the "gap where imagination lives," a creative space physically and metaphorically.

“At SingleThread we have so much inspiration from Japan — agriculture, hospitality, technique — we’ve applied that to Northern California, and now we have the opportunity to bring all this inspiration from hospitality, ingredients, techniques, and bring that back to Kyoto,” says chef Kyle Connaughton, who spent five years living, cooking, researching, and doing his apprenticeship in Japan. “These restaurants are a mirror to each other.”

To help run the SoNoMa kitchen, the Connaughtons have tapped the talented chef Keita Tominaga, who spent the last year cooking at SingleThread. The transition marks a return to Japan for the Sonoma born-and-raised chef, who spent time cooking at the modern Japanese Tenoshima in Tokyo and whose family hails from the Land of the Rising Sun.

The 10-course menu at SoNoMa will highlight local produce and product coming from Kyoto through a California lens. Katina is working with farmers in the Kansai region to bring over unique NorCal varieties of vegetables like heirloom tomatoes, peppers, and summer squash, to grow alongside native Kyoto vegetables and flowers.

“We feel grateful to have this cultural exchange through crops and agriculture — that’s always been the dream,” says Katina.

SoNoMa will additionally highlight Californian specialty ingredients from small artisanal purveyors like olive oil from [McEvoy Ranch](#) and cheeses from [Cowgirl Creamery](#), and almonds, of course (California produces approximately 80% of the world’s [almonds](#)).



“Kyoto is focused on micro-seasonality and those ingredients are around for a short amount of time,” says

Kyle. “What we want to do is give them an interpretation of those ingredients and show that sense of place and terroir of Kyoto with ingredients that they may not have had.”

And the Connaughtons clearly couldn’t call it SoNoMa if they didn’t bring the wine — there’ll be a large cellar stocked with plenty of bottles from renowned California wineries like Arnot-Roberts, Lioco, and Hirsch Vineyards.

During the day time, the adjacent SoNoMa lounge will offer light bites and an afternoon “high tea” experience, while the evening will focus on aperitifs, seasonally driven cocktails, and nonalcoholic beverages.

The final component of the concept will be a dedicated patisserie called SingleThread Entremets, which is named after the multi-layered composed cake. SingleThread’s Executive Pastry Chef Emma Horowitz and chef Miu Morita, who was previously at the three-Michelin-starred L’Effervescence in Tokyo, are leading the pastry program.

SingleThread celebrates its 10th anniversary this year, so opening a restaurant at this moment is an especially meaningful milestone.

“As a young cook I spent my whole career trying to learn about Japanese cuisine — the thought that I’d be able to come back and open a restaurant in Kyoto, to be part of the culinary community within the area — it’s an honor, and culturally we have a big responsibility to do it right,” says Connaughton.