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Chef Kertes joins Watermark at Brooklyn Heights senior community in Brooklyn as executive chef

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Kfir Kertes, photo by Ola Wilk/Wilk Marketing Communications

Brooklyn, NY Chef Kfir Kertes has joined The Watermark at Brooklyn Heights, a 275-unit seniors housing residence at 21 Clark St., opening this summer, as executive chef.

The \$330 million Brooklyn Heights property is one of five managed by Watermark Retirement Communities in their Élan Collection. This lifestyle brand of premier properties offers personal service with amenities. An extensive renovation and redevelopment of the historic Clark St. property is currently nearing completion.

“At The Watermark at Brooklyn Heights, we consider every meal to be a celebration of good taste, good health, and good company. We are delighted to welcome Kfir Kertes as our executive chef and are confident that his culinary expertise will maintain the high standards we have set for our members,” said executive director Rocco Bertini.

“I am passionate about the creation of exciting dishes with attractive presentation and incredible taste. I also hope to set a higher bar for gourmet expectations throughout the luxury senior living industry,” said Kertes. “Our dining team will be creating exciting daily specials, using fresh, locally sourced ingredients, that will offer variety and engage our members. Many of our dishes will be based on the Mediterranean culinary tradition, known for its health and wellness benefits.”

Kertes will direct all culinary operations, develop daily and seasonal menus, and will work closely with nutritionists and dieticians to translate members’ tastes and preferences into attractive, nutritious options that will offer quality while addressing individual needs. He will create custom menus for the property opening and other special events. Kertes will also oversee hiring, onboarding, and staff training for the food preparation personnel. Upon reaching full occupancy, The Watermark at Brooklyn Heights’ dining staff will total up to 75 people, including the kitchen crew of 30.

Rendering, the Willow + Clark Café. Courtesy of Watermark Retirement Communities

Rendering, the Gustoso & Family restaurant. Courtesy of Watermark Retirement Communities

Rendering, The W Room restaurant. Courtesy of Watermark Retirement Communities

The Watermark at Brooklyn Heights will offer several restaurant options. On the first floor, the Willow + Clark Café, a European-inspired casual café and bistro, and The Biblio, an intimate library and wine bar, provide welcoming spaces that foster gatherings with family and fellow members. The 50,000 s/f Dining and Entertainment Level features The W Room, a two-story formal restaurant and bar that serves three restaurant-style meals each day, and Gustoso & Family, an

Mediterranean-inspired exhibition kitchen centered around a wood-burning brick hearth. The property also houses a private dining room for special functions.

Menus will feature favorite recipes of both chefs and members, prepared in small batches and finished to order. House baked breads and freshly prepared desserts will be served each day. Room service will be available for residents who prefer to dine in their apartments. Finally, Gourmet Bites, Watermark's signature culinary program, restores the joy of dining for individuals living with physical, neuromuscular and cognitive changes through curated menus of quality, freshly prepared bite-sized dishes with modified textures and enhanced appearances and aromas that are easy to eat and appealing to residents.

Prior to joining Watermark, Kertes served as executive chef for Rockstar Hotels, Club Quarters, and Z NYC Hotel, all located in New York, NY. Previously, he managed special projects in Africa and Israel and worked as a chef and manager for several Israeli hotels and restaurants.

Located in the heart Brooklyn Heights Historic District, the 350,000 s/f property was originally constructed in 1928 as the Leverich Towers Hotel, which served as a haven for many celebrities and cultural icons, including the Brooklyn Dodgers. In 1975, Watchtower purchased The Towers as housing for their local Jehovah's Witness volunteer force, and restored the architectural features that defined the building's place in the Brooklyn Heights Historical District. The current renovation, designed by Montroy DeMarco Architecture and Lemay+Escobar, preserves much of the building's original structure and history, while adding a stylish interior. At 16 stories, with a rooftop terrace, garden, and Skyline club room, The Watermark at Brooklyn Heights will offer views of New York Harbor, the Manhattan skyline, the Brooklyn Bridge, and the Statue of Liberty.

The building's 275 apartments include 145 for independent living, 88 for assisted living, and 42 for memory care. The residences are offered in 78 different floor plans, configured, and designed to embrace the building's heritage. Ranging from studios to one- and two-bedrooms, the apartments at The Watermark will cater to each member's tastes, space requirements, and preferences. Apartments are all thoughtfully crafted with an open floor arrangement and feature designer kitchens or kitchenettes and modern bathrooms with walk-in showers. Mahogany-trimmed windows allow for natural light and views. The mahogany windows and their surrounds were protected during construction and integrated into the new design. The details throughout the project recall the building's days as a venue frequented by celebrities.

On the first level, the grand lobby leads to welcoming spaces including a café, wood-paneled library, wine bar, salon, and contemporary art gallery. The Dining and Entertainment level includes a full-service restaurant; a European-style restaurant with an exhibition kitchen; a movie theater; and a live performing arts center. An indoor heated swimming pool, fitness center, movement room, and wellness center are available on the Fitness and Wellness level. On the 16th floor, a rooftop clubroom with terraces offers seating and views of Manhattan.