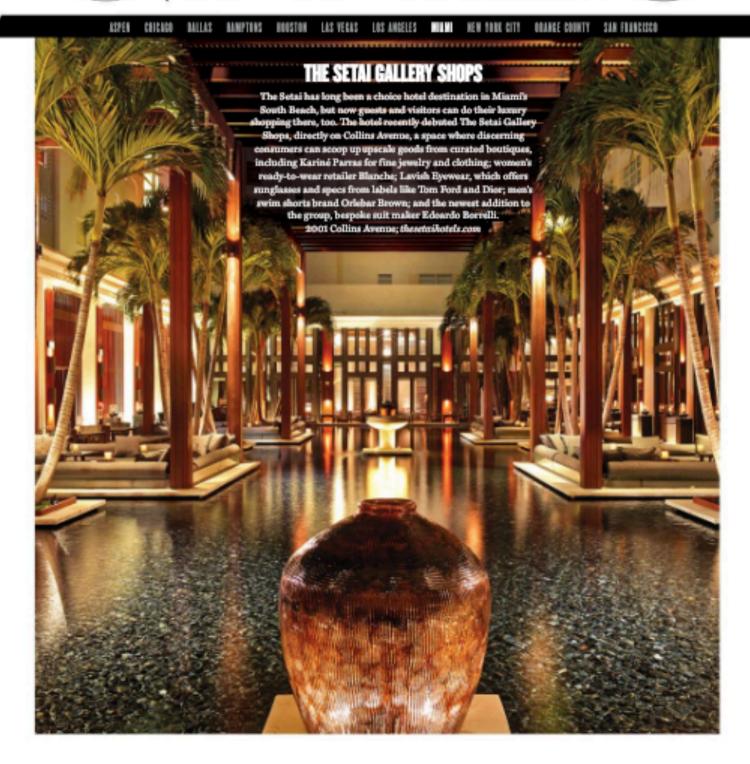


## DUJOUR DUJOUR



## MAN OF THE HOUSE

A seasoned hotelier places an iconic Sonoma mainstay back on the map. By Jennie Nunn

RUBÉN CAMBERO, general manager of the newly revamped MacArthur Place Hotel and Spa in Sonoma, ended up doing the one thing his mother told him not to do: hospitality. "My mother always told me, 'Do anything you want but hospitality,' due to the major sacrifices my parents had to make," says Cambero, who was born in Logroño, Spain, and hails from a long line of chefs and hoteliers. "Almost my entire family has had a career in hospitality. My mother is a Michelinstarred chef, and my father has always been the perfect host in his various restaurants, most notably at Hotel el Peregrino, a small luxury boutique hotel [member of Relais & Chateaux] that we owned in Navarra, Spain. What can I say? I guess it's genetic."

But Cambero, who studied business administration at Universidad Europea de Madrid, spent a year abroad at Uppsala University in Uppsala, Sweden, and earned a master certificate in hotel revenue management from Cornell University, once thought he would become a marine biologist. "I always dreamed of studying marine biology, probably due to my passion for the ocean," says Cambero, who lives in downtown Sonoma with his wife (who also works at the hotel in operations) and two children. "Or maybe due to my crazy head back then, when all I wanted to do was spend time at the beach and surf."

After meeting MacArthur Place's CEO. Larry Bain, at the suggestion of a recruiter, Cambero was hired at the 150-year-old property, now outfitted with 64 modern, farmhouse-inspired guest rooms, suites, and cottages with original exposed wood beams, and an on-site Mediterranean restaurant, Lavla, headed up by awardwinning chef Cole Dickinson (of The Bazaar by José Andrés in Beverly Hills and Voltaggio Brothers Steak House). "We have respected the history, and we are enhancing the experience," says Cambero of the hotel, replete with a no-tipping policy, complimentary bikes, and a seamless arrival practice. "We want to make sure that we do all the prep work and have everything taken care of for you,





so guests can just come and enjoy."

These days, he's busy perfecting the art of offering advice on everything from the perfect proposal and engagement ring selection to managing wish list requests. "I believe that hoteliers could write authentic best sellers," says Cambero, who once arranged a special surprise art studio visit for Woody Allen while at Hotel el Peregrino. "Welcoming guests is an art. There is something very special about the possibility of turning any given day into a lifetime memory, and we have the power and the ability to create that." 29 E. MacArthur Street; macarthurplace.com