



THE ROCK AND ROLL CHIEF *OF MODERN AMERICAN CUISINE*

BY KARLO STA. CRUZ

Chef David Burke compares the vibrant world of the culinary arts to the blaring, yet vital, rhythm of the drums in a band. Like the importance of a balanced heartbeat, the drums bring energy, life, and dimension to music. The pressure of maintaining a steady rhythm by multi-tasking can be quite daunting.

“When the drums are good, they’re good. And when they’re bad, well, they’re bad. Much like cooking,” said Burke, an accomplished New York Times three-starred chef and owner of upscale dining venues like Tavern, a modern, show-stopping American restaurant located in New York City’s glamorous Upper East Side.

From the smooth orchestration of cooks behind the kitchen

line to the necessary creativity to craft an intricate dish, cooking is like drumming. Chef David Burke, the rock and roll personality of the culinary world, ingeniously brings life to his culinary creations blending fundamental traditions with the vibrant electricity of a classic rock band.

The man is a mad genius in and out of the kitchen. Upon meeting Chef David Burke, I knew I had finally found the proclaimed, culinary rockstar—entertaining banter, unhinged success, and a license to break the rules for the sake of creative freedom. Burke wore a crystal-clear glasses frame and draped his silver hair right behind him like a cape. I expected a jolly presence. But, instead, I found a youthful flare glowing in a lifetime of wisdom on food, culture, people, and just life.





Chef David Burke is a long-standing culinary pioneer of the modern American kitchen, impacting the food industry from a multi-faceted standpoint. Burke is the owner of several world-class restaurants all over the country. As the culinary director of Asian-Cuban American fusion restaurant Ventanas in Fort Lee, New Jersey, the sky's the limit for fun and entertaining styles of food. Burke's playful "Clothesline Bacon" suspends crisp, thick-cut strips of bacon coated in a spiced jalapeño and pineapple syrup for an unforgettable experience. The torched bacon uses gravity to drip its flavorful fat onto a pickle placed below, reimagining the concept of the household ingredient entirely.

Burke's culinary prominence goes beyond his restaurants to sharing his knowledge with the rest of the world. Author of two cookbooks, *Cooking with David Burke* and *David Burke's New American Classics*, and a television spectacle, Burke's undeniable star power elevated his command in the kitchen to celebrity chef status. You might recognize Burke from the small screen with

major appearances in Bravo's *Top Chef Masters* or *Top Chef Duels* and guest features on the *Everyday with Rachel Ray Show*.

The legendary, self-made figure also built his own company, David Burke Group, with sub-companies like David Burke Hospitality Management. This culinary consulting branch creates distinctive foodservice strategies and menu designs for restaurants, hotels, and clubs with a grand focus on hospitality and the overall guest experience.

An accomplished icon of the modern era of American gastronomy, Chef David Burke's prodigious pursuit for greatness began at a young age in suburbia. Born in Brooklyn, New York, and raised in the proverbial Central Jersey suburb of Hazlet, Burke's young, innate culinary talent brought him to the notorious Sheraton Hotel on Route 35 as the dishwasher at the age of 15. From there, Burke's father signed him up for cooking classes at the local Williams Sonoma thinking that "he would hate it." But instead, the young prodigy absorbed every lesson like a sponge.





Burke's ardent passion for cooking came with an obsession to master traditional fundamentals, taking him next to the Navesink Country Club in Red Bank, NJ. After graduating number two in his class at the prestigious Culinary Institute of America in 1982, the young cook traveled around the globe, gaining a vast, renewed perspective working as a private chef in Norway and beyond in Singapore. To this day, the chef has worked, demoed, and cooked in more than 25 countries.

"Traveling the world enriches your understanding and respect for other methods of cooking. It gives you ideas. You learn why people do things differently through history and gain a comprehensive picture of global cuisines," said Burke as he uncovered the purpose of certain styles of cooking. "Why do warmer countries closer to the equator like Mexico cook spicy food? The heat from ingredients like chiles activates the body's innate cooling mechanism – sweating."

Drawing from the traditional fundamentals of classic European cooking, Burke fuses his electric culinary perspective with an extensive toolbox of techniques to create the most innovative plates on the table. Burke's mastery of French techniques and American creativity was confirmed at the age of 26 after receiving 3 stars at New York City's legendary River Café. Burke is the only American to receive the Meilleurs Ouvriers de France Diplôme d'Honneur, demonstrating his elite command for French cuisine.

Decades later in his career, the household name of Chef David Burke continues to prosper beyond the ever-changing cooking industry. In a technologically advanced world of stunning food photos instantly shared on social media and a competitive new wave of cooks, the pressure to stay in the spotlight intensifies. But Burke's once limitless youthful energy honed into stable gratitude towards sharing high-quality food with the best ingredients possible. And in his vast experience, an emphasis on hospitality, how guests feel in their dining experiences, always wins.

"Years ago, within the first 120 days of a restaurant opening,

a food critic could walk in the door and shut down the place with one tarnishing review. We would all obsessively fixate over everything," said Burke. "After decades, I realize the best people you could cook for are your customers—and that's the truth."

The COVID-19 pandemic challenged Burke and his team with unexpected obstacles to overcome. But the experienced chef invested early in philanthropy with charitable organizations and even facilitated a pop-up in Asbury Park. Proactivity cushioned the surprises of this year and although COVID hurt the business, it did not hurt the overall brand.

Chef David Burke brings the New York City glamour back to his Central Jersey roots with his newest restaurant Orchard Park in East Brunswick, New Jersey. The newest addition to Burke's brand is located within the dazzling lights of the refined Chateau

Grande Hotel, resembling old-style European architecture seen in the Palace of Versailles. Orchard Park features a gourmet modern American menu carefully curated by Chef Burke himself. And don't worry, the clothesline bacon made the menu along with popular favorites like the Honey Roasted Duck and Lobster Dumplings.

Orchard Park displays the luxurious menu items easily accessible in populated cities like New York, but its strategic placement in a New Jersey suburb is no coincidence. The city-level restaurant would not have survived decades ago, Chef Burke claims, but times have evolved to support a sustainable supply chain. Nowadays, city-level, elevated food can exist outside of

populated, high-demand areas and even off Route 18.

Chef David Burke's innate talent in the kitchen has spurred up a long-lasting career in the food industry thanks to his electric energy. From prodigious award-winning chef at the age of 26 to electrifying rocker years later, Chef Burke proves that with age comes an extended appreciation for the meaning of food in life. As the electrifying rock band drummer of the modern American kitchen of his time, Chef David Burke always knows how to channel a rhythm of food that takes on new dimensions, blending tradition, invention, youth, and experience all on one plate.

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