



Celebrity Chef David Burke Discusses His New Restaurant Tavern62, Holiday Cooking and His Biggest Lessons Learned

INTERVIEW Jacquari Harris

JMG: What do you think separates Tavern62 from other American-inspired restaurants in NYC?

Chef David Burke: I've been cooking in New York since 1984. So I've seen a lot of trends and I've been cooking in the Upper East Side neighborhood since '92. So I've seen a lot of leases come and go. I think what's happening with American food right now after the phase of molecular gastronomy and some of the high price tag New York City tasting menu only restaurants, is a return to what I like to call hardwood floors, brick-building food. That's the classic, very good value driven restaurant. It's things that are a little more familiar, and more tried and true. That's something I've been doing for a long time. I've done some really creative things in my career since the River Café in the '80s. I think Tavern62 is in one of America's best ZIP codes and it's a tavern in the sense that it's casual enough to drop in at any time, but on the high end of a tavern where it's a date place, or a place to conduct a business dinner. But it's also a place where you can have a burger at the bar and have a glass of wine. We've stripped down the pomp and circumstance of

what a great restaurant has to be. So I think it stands out because it's driven by a celebrity chef from a quality standpoint, but its run like a mom and pop in the neighborhood with price and value in mind.

Since the holidays are here, what can you recommend for people to make for either an office party or for family and friends?

A lot of people cook turkey for the holidays, but I think a turkey is good for Thanksgiving but for the other holidays I still like birds, but I think a good large roast chicken is something that's good for home. Duck is too messy for home, and if it's not done the right way, it won't come out very well. For the office, I like to do stuff in smaller pieces like cutlet style. So if you're going to do turkey, do cutlets or maybe grill them and make small medallions so people can pick them up easily. Also, charcuterie is good. You can put it on a nice platter, or a nice side of smoked salmon.

Since people eat so many things for the holidays, is there a go-to wine you can recommend that goes with almost anything?

There's more than one right way.

I think a nice pinot noir, especially in the chillier months, works well with anything. A pinot noir from Washington or Oregon works well. If you're going to do a white wine, you can do a Sauvignon Blanc throughout the holidays. There's also very good rum out now. It's nice to warm you up and sip on the rocks before or after dinner.

What's one lesson that you've learned in your 25-year career that you can share?

I think one of the best lessons I've learned about being a chef is that there's more than one way to do things. There's more than one right way. I think one of the most important things I've learned is that you have to be adaptable. You also have to be a good listener and you have to keep up with trends. At the end of the day, be thankful to be doing something for a living that you really love.