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WHAT I LOVE
DAVID BURKE

Collecting or Hoarding? A Celebrity Chef's View

By JOANNE KAUFMAN

When you visit David Burke's bright, airy two-bedroom penthouse apartment in a high-rise rental building in Fort Lee, N.J., you can chow down on the pastrami salmon, the candied bacon and the burrata, all prepared by Mr. Burke, the celebrated chef whose newest restaurant, Tavern 62 by David Burke, opened in mid-October on the Upper East Side of Manhattan.

But perhaps you would rather feast on the panoramic views — river, George Washington Bridge, New York City skyline — from the floor-to-ceiling windows.

For 15 years, until this past March, Mr. Burke, 54, lived 45 floors down and 300 yards away, in a ground-floor condo duplex near the waterfront with three bedrooms and a backyard. "I gave up walking outside and being in a pristine space overlooking Manhattan," he said. "That I miss. It was a stellar location for outdoor entertaining, but I wasn't around enough to enjoy it."

Mr. Burke has tighter quarters now, including a compact open kitchen with a microwave he has yet to figure out; a refrigerator that contains eggs (a signature Burke ingredient), yogurt and samples of sauces and dressings (apple balsamic, Key lime mustard, barbecue) that he's bringing to market; and a freezer whose contents are limited to ice cream.

"I had a separate kitchen before," he said. "But when you were in there you weren't part of the conversation. The kitchen wasn't part of the living room/dining room, which is what I have now and what I prefer."

And really, a big kitchen would be a waste of space: Mr. Burke, whose previous ventures include Fishtail and David Burke



PHOTOGRAPHS BY FRED R. CORLAD FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Name David Burke

Age 54

Occupation

Chef, restaurateur, author

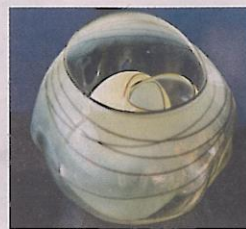
On Collecting Art

"I like to keep buying art. My taste changes. I have some funky stuff and some class stuff. Sometimes I hang something in my house and I become blind to it, because I see it all the time. But if I hang it in a restaurant, other people get to enjoy it. There's no sense in having a big piece of art if no one sees it."

Townhouse, makes little more at home than coffee and reservations.

If he had been in charge of designing the apartment the way he was in charge of designing the chef's knife he proudly points to on the counter, the space would have been more open, Mr. Burke said. The windowless office, a repository of plaques and medallions that he holds dear, like the honorary diploma from Meilleurs Ouvriers de France and Japan's Nippon Award of Excellence for Distinguished Skill in Cooking, would have been connected to the living room.

He shares the apartment with a cat ("I don't like cats, so I call him Blue Dog; he's cute, though") and his off-again-on-again



girlfriend, Cristina Laverde, who works in the wine and spirits industry.

"We were together, and then we split up, and then I took her back," Mr. Burke said waggishly.

"We got together in 2001 and broke up in 2009," said Ms. Laverde, offering her version of the romance. "And then, a year and a half ago, I said, 'I'll take you back on probation. We'll see.'"

Here's a snapshot of their relationship: Mr. Burke leaves things out on the breakfast bar or perhaps the couch. Ms. Laverde gets tired of the clutter and puts the offending objects — most recently, some brand-new shirts — into one of the three storage spaces Mr. Burke maintains on the second floor of the building. The spillover goes to the house he bought as an investment in Middletown, N.J.

"I'm not a hoarder," he said. "But I like

The chef David Burke rotates art among his apartment in Fort Lee, N.J., his restaurants and storage. Above from left, Mr. Burke's clogs, hand-painted by the artist Dale Chihuly; a driftwood piece he calls "my butter"; a Chihuly piece; and a Meilleurs Ouvriers de France Diplôme d'Honneur medallion, one of his many professional awards.

collecting art and things I don't need."

For example, he doesn't exactly need the 1,200 cookbooks in his collection. He doesn't need the full line of Cuisinart equipment and gadgetry, or every item in the Illy coffee line. But you just never know, and so Mr. Burke holds onto the lot.

And because he doesn't make any distinction between home life and restaurant life, he shifts various pieces of art from one location to the other. A while back, when he saw some blown-glass balloons in a gallery, \$100 a pop, he bought a half-dozen and hung them in an Arts and Crafts house he owned years ago in Mountainside, N.J.

"I knew I would put them in a restaurant, because they were so festive and cool," said Mr. Burke, who soon dispatched them to David Burke Townhouse, now shuttered. The vintage Bugatti racecar model that hangs on the wall at Tavern 62 was previ-

ously tucked into a corner of another Burke restaurant, where it got no love, and then briefly became part of Mr. Burke's home décor before going into storage for a while.

When Mr. Burke sold his nearby condo, he gave the furniture to one of the doormen and bought a sectional, a dining table, a desk and a bed, all with simple lines, for his new quarters, the better to showcase the view and the art: Picasso and Chagall lithographs; a group of blown-glass "baskets" by Dale Chihuly, who painted Mr. Burke's work clogs as a special favor; an enormous, brightly painted missionary bell; and a driftwood figure that Mr. Burke bought in Sonoma, Calif., and refers to as "my butter."

"I brought it into Fishtail once and put it at the top of the stairs, and people said, 'I don't like that, it's kind of creepy,'" he said. "But I think it's great. I like the fact that not everybody thinks so. It's like an ugly dog."