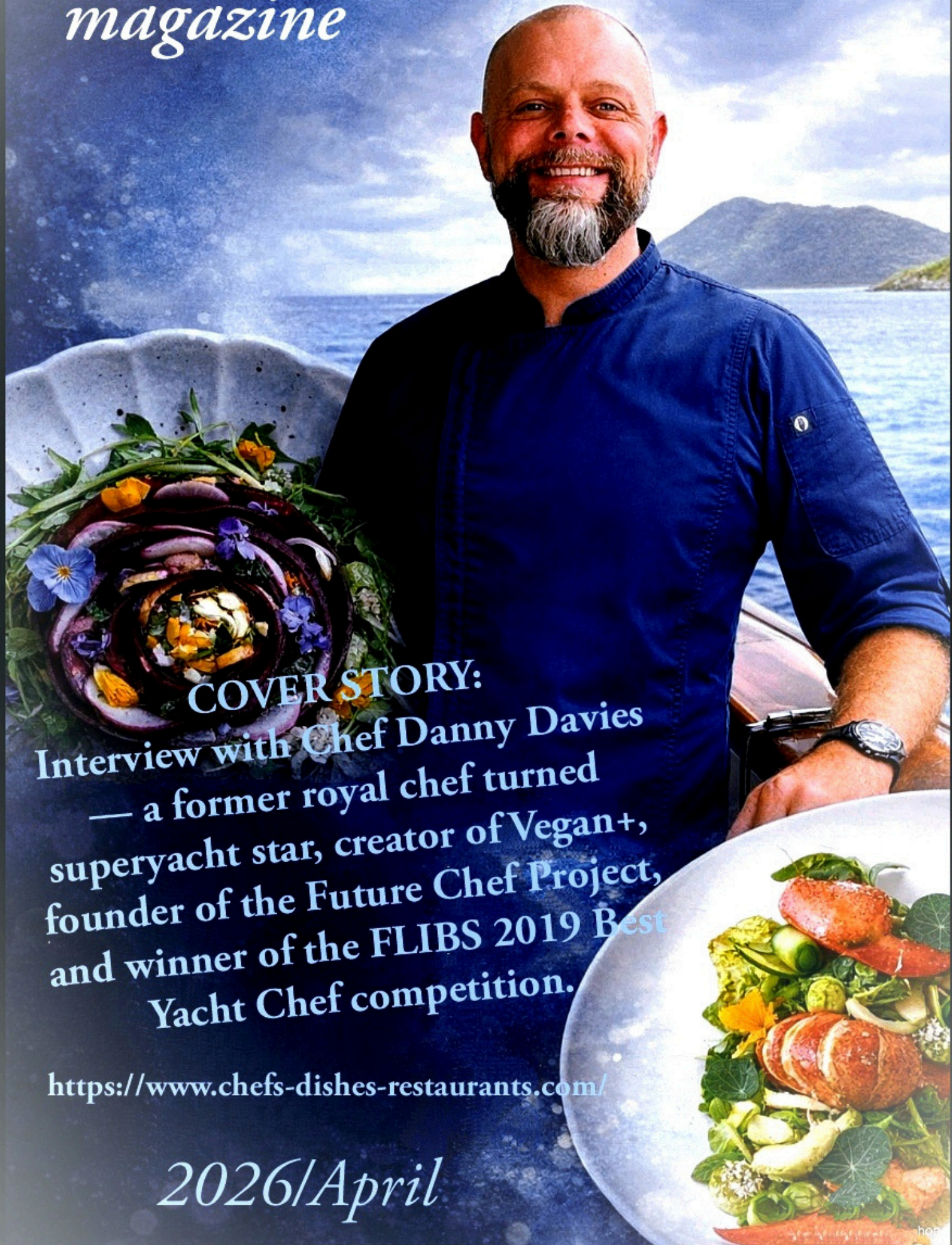


# *Chefs. Dishes. Restaurants magazine*



## **COVER STORY:**

**Interview with Chef Danny Davies**  
— a former royal chef turned  
superyacht star, creator of Vegan+,  
founder of the Future Chef Project,  
and winner of the FLIBS 2019 Best  
Yacht Chef competition.

<https://www.chefs-dishes-restaurants.com/>

*2026/April*



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Julija Toth, Founder, Editor

Welcome to Chefs. Dishes. Restaurants magazine!

My passion goes far beyond the art of culinary and pastry. It is not only about techniques, nor solely about the history and stories behind dishes and restaurants—it is about people.

People are the true creators. They shape ideas through countless trials, refine them with dedication, and bring them to life with passion—for their craft, for their ingredients, and for the joy of those they serve. Each of them carries a unique philosophy, a distinct way of transforming personal stories into something tangible, something unforgettable: a dish.

“Chefs. Dishes. Restaurants” was created to tell these stories. Because in the end, every plate holds more than flavor—it holds a narrative that may one day become part of culinary history. Just as sushi, just as tiramisu, began as expressions of culture and creativity, today’s creations are tomorrow’s heritage.

At the same time, we believe in supporting the people behind the craft. Gastronomy professionals deserve access to knowledge and care—whether it is guidance on free mental health support, insights into emerging culinary technologies, or tools and applications that make their work more efficient and organized.

All of this forms the essence of “Chefs. Dishes. Restaurants.”

We hope you will join us—whether as a reader, a contributor, or a storyteller—and be part of this journey for years to come.

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INNOVATION

and

TECHNOLOGY



**Deborah Wehrens is an owner of Culus Project, Culinary IP Broker, Author of Culinary IP**



### **Who is Deborah before the project?**

I was 16 when I started as an apprentice in fine dining restaurants. At that time, kitchens were still heavily French-oriented, structured, precise, and demanding. I was shy and insecure, and the dishes became my safe space, a place where I could disappear and communicate without having to speak. It became my way of coping, my hiding place. But there was no option to remain invisible for long. I had to learn, improve, and perform. My chefs quickly recognized strong potential, and I was labeled a talent early on. However, I was also the only girl in a male-dominated environment, and not everyone could accept that a woman could outperform them. That created tension, pressure, and resistance, but I kept going. It was a difficult world to enter, and I often said that I did not step into a kitchen, I stepped into the military.

At 23, after working in some of the best restaurants in the Netherlands — I am Dutch, by the way — I took my final and highest professional exam. After years of working relentlessly and sacrificing almost everything, this exam was meant to be the crown on my work. But I failed. During the dessert, I had to use sugar, but I mistakenly took salt. That moment became the biggest disappointment of my career. After that, I stopped working in fine dining restaurants. I moved to Belgium and started working as a chef in brasseries.

The work was different. It was less about perfection and more about volume, cooking for large groups of people without overthinking every detail. But deep inside, I could never fully let go of what I had built. Three years ago, I had to stop working as a chef completely. My body, especially my knees, could no longer keep up with the physical demands of the profession. I had to stay home to recover, and during that time one question kept returning: what now? I experimented with several concepts, but none of them truly connected with me, so they failed. Until KooK Studioo came to life.

This concept focused on publishing about food, developing recipes, and writing about culinary work in a structured and intellectual way. I began rewriting menu cards, something I immediately loved doing, and through that work I discovered menu engineering. That is how I moved into culinary intellectual property. I realized this was where my strength truly lies. It combines creativity, structure, strategy, and long-term value. I developed my own method, the Culus Method™, and as I started attracting more clients internationally, the name KooK Studioo no longer reflected the scope of the work. I changed the name to



Culius and built a brand around it. This is what I love to do, what I am good at, and where my experience finally comes together in a way that creates lasting impact.

### **How did this amazing idea come to you?**

The idea did not come as one single moment of inspiration. It came from frustration. For years I saw chefs working extremely hard, creating dishes, menus, concepts, and entire culinary identities, but owning almost nothing in the end. Everything stayed dependent on time, presence, and physical effort. If you stop, the value stops. I knew this model was fragile, because I experienced it myself when I had to stop working in the kitchen. Your knowledge, your creativity, your techniques — all of it lives in your head, but it is not structured in a way that can continue independently of you. That realization forced me to think differently. I did not want to start again from zero, I wanted to build something that could hold value over time.

When I started working more with menu structures, recipe development, and positioning, I began to see that the real value was not in one individual recipe, but in the system behind it. A single recipe is very difficult to legally protect.

That is simply the reality. But a structured body of work — a method, a framework, a consistent way of developing and organizing culinary concepts — can be protected, scaled, licensed, and transferred. That insight changed everything. I stopped looking at recipes as isolated creations and started seeing them as components of intellectual property.

The first challenge was legal clarity. You cannot easily register one recipe as exclusive property, because ingredients and basic preparations are considered functional knowledge. But the combination of structure, naming, documentation, process design, and strategic positioning creates something much stronger. That is where the Culius Method™ started to take shape. It is not about claiming ownership over food itself, but about creating a repeatable system that produces consistent value for businesses.

Another challenge was explaining this idea to the market. Many people in the food industry are used to thinking in terms of services: cooking, consulting, creating menus, giving advice. Intellectual property feels abstract at first. But once chefs and food businesses understand that they can build assets instead of constantly selling hours, the perspective shifts. They begin to see that their work can create long-term leverage instead of short-term income.

In the beginning, I had to test, refine, and structure everything myself. I invested a lot of time in defining what exactly creates value, what can be standardized without losing creativity, and how culinary work can function as an asset instead of a one-time activity. Step by step, the method became clearer, stronger, and more applicable to different types of food businesses.

What started as a personal necessity became a strategic model. The limitation around protecting single recipes was not a barrier in the end — it was actually the reason the Culius Method™ became much more powerful than just a collection of dishes. It became a framework that allows culinary professionals to build something that lasts beyond the moment of service.



**You wrote a book and are offering it for free so that your target audience can better understand your concept. How has the audience responded? What is their level of understanding so far?**

The response has been very strong, but also very revealing. Many people immediately recognize the problem: they have been creating value for years, but very little of that value is actually owned or structured in a way that continues to generate return. They understand the pressure of constantly producing new menus, new dishes, new concepts, without building anything that accumulates. That part resonates instantly, because it reflects their daily reality.

At the same time, intellectual property in food is still a new way of thinking for many professionals. Chefs are trained to perfect execution, not to structure ownership. So the first level of understanding often starts with curiosity.

People realize that what they create can become more than a one-time output, but they do not always immediately see how to translate that into their own situation. That is exactly why the book is offered for free. It removes the barrier and allows them to explore the idea at their own pace, without pressure. What I see now is a shift in the questions people ask. Instead of only asking how to improve a menu or develop a recipe, they start asking how they can structure their knowledge, how they can make their concepts repeatable, and how they can stop depending entirely on time-based work. That is an important change, because it shows they begin to see the strategic layer behind their craft.

The level of understanding is growing, but it is a process. Once people see practical examples, the concept becomes much clearer. They begin to recognize that they already possess valuable intellectual property, but that it has never been organized in a deliberate way. The book acts as the first step in that awareness. It helps them see their work differently, not only as production, but as creation of long-term value.

For many readers, it is also a moment of reflection. They start to evaluate how their business is structured today, what they actually own, and what continues to generate value even when they are not physically present. That shift in perspective is exactly the purpose of the book. It creates a foundation for more strategic decisions and opens the door to building something that is more stable, more scalable, and ultimately more sustainable.

**Can you describe your project from the initial idea to its current stage, so our readers can fully understand it and potentially start using it? Also, how has the culinary industry and community reacted to your concept, especially regarding intellectual property in the culinary field?**

The project began out of necessity. After years in fine dining, moving from Michelin-level kitchens to brasseries, and eventually being forced to stop cooking because my body couldn't keep up, I had to confront a question that had no easy answer: what next? I tried different concepts, but none of them resonated. It wasn't until I started documenting menus, rewriting recipes, and analyzing menu structures that I realized the value wasn't in individual dishes—it was in the system, the method behind creating consistent, high-value culinary output. That insight became the foundation of the Culus Method™.



From there, the project evolved deliberately. I began packaging my knowledge into a framework that could be taught, licensed, and applied to different types of food businesses. I rebranded from KooK Studio to Culus to reflect its international scope and strategic nature. Today, the method isn't just about recipes or menus—it's about turning culinary knowledge into intellectual property, structuring it so chefs and food businesses can generate long-term value from work that traditionally disappears the moment they stop cooking.

The initial response from the culinary community was cautious, because the idea of intellectual property in kitchens is still foreign. Chefs are used to thinking in terms of skill and execution, not asset creation. But as they see the method applied, the reaction shifts quickly. They recognize that everything they've been producing—the recipes, the menus, the techniques—already carries immense value, but until now it's been fleeting. With the method, they can capture, structure, and leverage it.

Right now, Culus is fully operational: the method is applied internationally, tested in multiple markets, and constantly refined. It has moved beyond a personal solution into a blueprint that allows food professionals to transform their work from time-bound labor into enduring assets. It challenges the industry to see chefs not just as service providers, but as creators of scalable, protected value.

#### **What do you believe is the future of your idea?**

The future of this idea is about redefining how the culinary world measures value. Traditional kitchens, restaurants, and food businesses are built on time, presence, and execution — everything stops when the chef stops. I see a shift coming where culinary professionals start building assets instead of just output. Recipes, menus, techniques, and concepts won't just be tools for daily work; they'll become intellectual property that can be scaled, licensed, and leveraged across multiple markets.

I believe the Culus Method™ will evolve into an industry standard for capturing and protecting culinary knowledge. More chefs and food businesses will see that structuring their work creates freedom: freedom from constant physical labor, freedom to expand internationally, freedom to collaborate without losing control of their ideas. Beyond individual businesses, it can change how the industry as a whole thinks about creativity, ownership, and growth — moving from a culture of immediate service to one of long-term value creation. Ultimately, I see a future where culinary intellectual property is as respected and actionable as any other creative field. Chefs won't just cook; they'll build brands, systems, and frameworks that continue generating impact long after the dishes leave the kitchen. This is not a trend—it's a shift in how culinary work is defined, measured, and monetized.

#### **Do you enjoy cooking yourself?**

Yes, I do, but in a very different way than before. I no longer cook under pressure or for long hours in a kitchen where every mistake is magnified.

Now, cooking is about curiosity, experimentation, and clarity — testing ideas, refining techniques, and understanding how flavors and structure work together. It's creative, controlled, and purposeful. I enjoy it most when it feeds the work I do with Culus: when a dish, a menu, or a concept becomes an example of a



system, a method, or a piece of intellectual property. I also live in a co-housing situation, so I really appreciate it when I don't have to cook for once — my housemate is a fantastic chef, and being able to step back and just enjoy someone else's cooking is a rare luxury that I value immensely.

**What is your favorite food, and what is your favorite dish to cook?**

I love food that tells a story, that carries culture and history on the plate.

Indonesian food, with its layers of spice and complexity, always fascinates me — the way every dish balances heat, sweetness, and depth is almost architectural. Indian food has the same effect; the intensity of flavors, the careful layering of spices, the way a simple ingredient becomes something extraordinary — it keeps me endlessly curious. I'm equally drawn to soups, not just for comfort, but because a good soup captures the essence of an idea, a season, a technique, in one bowl. And I will never say no to cheese with bread, from anywhere in the world — a simple combination that somehow manages to be both humble and indulgent, universal and utterly personal.

If there is one thing I would like to leave with the reader, it is this: creativity becomes truly powerful the moment you decide to structure it. Whether you are a chef, a food entrepreneur, or a creator in any field, the question is not only what you make, but what remains once the work is finished. When knowledge, ideas, and experience are intentionally shaped into something repeatable, they stop being temporary effort and start becoming long-term value. That shift changes not only how you work, but also what your work can ultimately become.



HISTORY

of

FOOD



**Craig Burns**  
Founder and CEO  
of FusiFood and Forgotten Feasts projects,  
AI food industry consultant  
[Fusifood.com](http://Fusifood.com)



**Who is Craig Burns before the food history adventure?**

I lived in Los Angeles for over 30 years, mostly involved in the media industry. I worked in operations, on set, in grip and lighting, and marketing—many different areas of production.

**How did it start? Where did your interest in food history come from?**

I worked extremely hard in my media career—long days, long commutes—and I developed bad eating habits with fast food. In 2016, that caught up with me, and I had a five-way heart bypass. I returned to work, but in 2020, I had a stroke, which forced me to rethink. After recovering, I sold my business and moved to Turkey, where I discovered a whole new food outlook—local, clean, and organic. That’s where my passion for good food really began.

**Your project is big—what was your goal at the start, and what is it now?**

When I came to Turkey, I realized food is naturally fresh and local here. I started eating healthier, losing weight, and seeing how vital good food is. My goal was to share that. Now, it’s grown into a broader mission—empowering people, with technology, to make food their daily medicine.

**Are the recipes you cook created by your recipe generator?**

Some are! My recipe generators are for discovery, especially for chefs. Personally, I focus on pure, clean foods daily, but I absolutely use the generator to explore and create.

**What is your favorite food?**

I love eggplant! I also enjoy berries, nuts, eggs, some meats, fresh food, and I’m a big fan of a couple avocados every day.

**What do you think about the future of culinary?**

We’re on the edge of something new! With AI, we can tailor food to our health, preventing illness before it starts. Instead of just treating sickness, we’ll eat what’s right for us—food will truly be our daily medicine.

**Where do you find the time to make all these incredible things happen?**

After I moved from Los Angeles to Turkey, I sold my business in L.A. I was very anxious to explore Turkey—visiting different regions, ruins, and seeing the country. I fell in love with the food and started wondering what people in these regions ate. That curiosity led me to research what foods were available and what arrived via trade routes, which sparked my interest in food origins.

**What was your goal when you started, and how does it compare to now?**

Initially, I wanted to write small books about where foods came from. As I researched, I became fascinated with trade routes, discovering food origins—cucumbers from the Himalayas, bananas from Papua New Guinea, eggplants from India, apples from the Caspian Sea. I studied trade routes and when foods reached Turkey, given its central location. I also began using AI tools to speed up my research. This led me to develop a recipe generator and to study what people ate before 1492, before the Columbian Exchange. I wrote books, mapped global trade routes, and recreated ancient recipes from around the world.

**And what about now, with FusiFood being a larger project?**



FusiFood isn't released yet, but it's much bigger. We're dealing with over 10 million recipes across 190 countries. Combining recipes can create trillions of unique combinations. The AI doesn't just match flavors—it also contrasts them. Many of these fusion dishes have never existed before. It's coming soon, and it's a much larger, ambitious project. We all need to be mindful of what we eat. It's easy to grab whatever's convenient, but if we pause and choose what we truly need, we'll feel better. Eating smaller portions, more regularly, can keep us nourished and healthy.





## Where does wine come from

By Julija Toth

If you ask ten people a simple question — “Where does wine come from?” — the answers will usually split in two. Half will say Ancient Greece.

The other half will confidently answer France.

Ancient Greece feels like an obvious choice. We all know Dionysus, the Greek god of wine — wild, excessive, divine. During the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games, he even reappeared in modern form, reminding the world that wine, for the Greeks, was never just a drink. It was power, ritual, and celebration. One might easily imagine that ancient Greek wine must have been strong enough to explain both philosophy and chaos. France, of course, feels equally convincing. It shaped the modern idea of wine as culture. Estates like Château de Goulaine, producing wine since around the year 1000 AD, show how deeply wine is woven into European history. A thousand years of winemaking is impressive — but still, it's not the beginning.

Because the real birthplace of wine was hiding somewhere else entirely.

In 2007, archaeologists working in a cave near the village of Areni, in Armenia's Vayots Dzor province, made a discovery that quietly rewrote wine history. Inside the Areni-1 cave complex, they found the oldest known winery in the world, dating back more than 6,000 years, to around 4000 BC.

This was not a single vessel or a lucky coincidence. The cave contained everything needed for winemaking: a shallow basin for stomping grapes, deep vats for fermentation and storage, drinking cups, and grape seeds. A complete production process. Evidence of knowledge, intention, and experience.

The wine was most likely used in burial rituals, which tells us something important: wine already had meaning. It was ceremonial. It mattered.

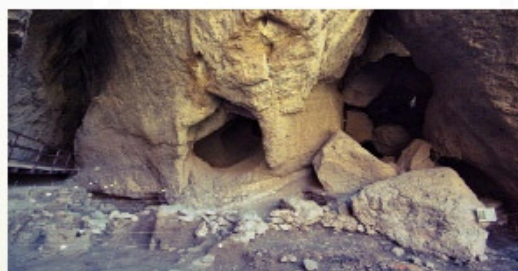
And here comes the detail that makes the story wonderfully human.

In the same cave, archaeologists also discovered the oldest leather shoe in the world.

Which suggests one thing very clearly: these people took their wine seriously. Perhaps seriously enough to test it thoroughly. Seriously enough to celebrate a little too long. Seriously enough to walk out of the cave missing one shoe — and never come back for it.

So when we argue today about whether wine belongs to Greece or France, we forget one small detail.

Long before gods, châteaux, or appellations, someone in a cave in Armenia already knew how to make good wine — and maybe enjoyed it just a bit too much.





# CHEF'S LIFE



## Chef Danny Davies



### Head Chef M/Y Mirage. Host: Behind the Line with Chef Danny Davies

Danny Davies' journey into the world of cuisine began in the most humble way—washing dishes in a small pub in Derby, UK, at just 13 years old. Within six months, he had worked his way up to cooking Sunday roasts for 50 people. It was there, plate by plate, that something clicked. The smiles, the compliments, the quiet satisfaction of feeding others—this was the first time he truly felt valued. In that moment, he knew: this was his path.

Determined to follow that calling, Danny went on to culinary school and stepped into his first professional kitchen at 18, working in a seafood restaurant. His talent and drive carried him forward quickly, and soon he became a head chef apprentice in an Italian kitchen. But an even more extraordinary chapter awaited. Not long after, he joined the Royal Household as a chef through his service in the British Army, completing five tours over ten years. His dedication and skill ultimately led him to serve as a Royal Chef to Prince William and Prince Harry—an experience that would shape both his discipline and his vision.

Then, as often happens, a single moment changed everything. A friend's post about working on a yacht in Monaco sparked his curiosity—and he followed it. In 2017, Danny stepped aboard the 400-foot Royal Yacht *\*Al Lusail\** for his first role at sea. It was meant to be temporary, but it didn't take long for him to fall in love with the rhythm of life on the water. Soon after, he joined a busy 160-foot charter yacht, where he truly found his stride, embracing the fast pace, the creativity, and the ever-changing nature of the lifestyle.

Between these chapters, life brought its own beautiful turns. Danny spent time in Fiji and New Zealand, guiding dives and running an oceanfront pizza spot, soaking in a slower, sunlit way of living. It was there that he became a father—now proud dad of two—which shifted his perspective once again. Returning to the UK with his family, he pursued a degree in education and achieved the level of master chef.



But for Danny, cooking was never just about food—it was about sharing knowledge and inspiring others. His passion for teaching grew alongside his culinary career. In London, he helped launch the city’s first Hospitality, Food & Enterprise Career College and founded the Future Chef Project, creating opportunities for young chefs to connect with industry leaders through hands-on and digital learning. He even worked within Michelin-starred kitchens, capturing signature dishes so students could recreate them and present their work to top chefs online. The program quickly gained recognition for its depth and rigor, opening doors for aspiring talent.

A few years later, a new horizon called. In 2017, Danny moved to Florida, stepping fully into his next chapter on superyachts—bringing with him not only skill and experience, but a story shaped by passion, resilience, and a genuine love for both people and food.

## Reflections from Behind the Lines

### How do you feel now? Do you feel like a successful, happy chef?

Danny: I feel proud of how far I’ve come from a small town in the UK to yacht chef on a 89m superyacht...but not finished, not yet.

I’ve built a life through cooking that’s taken me from the military to superyachts, from teaching students in world class training kitchens to some of the most incredible places in the world. I’ve worked hard for it, and I don’t take that lightly. So yes, I feel successful in the sense that I’ve earned my place.

These days, I feel like I’m stepping into my full potential not just as a chef, but as someone who can help shape the next generation coming through.

### Was there ever a time you wished you were doing something else?

Danny: Yes, of course, especially working on a superyacht, seeing the crew fly by on a jet ski or guests coming back from a fishing trip.

There have been moments where the pressure, the hours, and the responsibility catch up with you. This job can be intense, especially when you care about doing it properly.

But it was never that I wanted to walk away from cooking completely. It was more that I wanted a bit of relief from the pressure.

But cooking has given me everything, purpose, direction, and the chance to see the world in a way I never would have otherwise. It’s taken me places I could never have imagined.

So even on the hard days, I wouldn’t trade it.

### Being an awarded chef—does it change anything?

Danny: Awards are recognition, and I respect that. Winning competitions and being invited to judge and host at that level means something. It shows that the work you’re doing is being seen. But awards don’t change the reality of the job. Every dish still has to deliver. Every guest still has to be looked after. The



pressure doesn't disappear. If anything, it makes me more accountable. You represent something now not just yourself, but the industry and the younger chefs watching you. That's why I take competitions seriously. I've seen how much they can impact a chef's career. They build confidence, open doors, and push people to grow. That's something I want to keep being part of. I'm very proud to be on judging panels or to be hosting chef competitions.

#### **Your philosophy when creating a dish or menu?**

Danny: Respect the ingredient. Respect the guest. That's always the starting point.

I don't believe in overcomplicating food just to impress. I believe in balance, clean flavours, and understanding what the dish is trying to be.

On yachts especially, you have to read the moment. The setting, the weather, the mood of the guests. A menu should feel right for where you are. It's not just a collection of dishes, it's an experience. And above all, I want people to feel taken care of. That's what hospitality is about.

#### **What inspires you?**

Danny: Real life. Travel, the ocean, local produce, markets, different cultures, those things inspire me far more than trends.

But these days, I'm also inspired by development. Helping other chefs grow, seeing their careers develop, watching someone gain confidence, that means a lot to me.

That's something I'm passionate about now, helping move the industry forward, not just being part of it.

#### **Burnout, has it happened?**

Danny: Yes, and it's real.

This industry can take a lot out of you if you're not careful. For a long time, there was this mindset that being exhausted, run down, and pushing through no matter what was just part of the job. I don't see it like that anymore.

For me, the shift came when I started taking my lifestyle seriously. Fitness, nutrition, discipline and consistency, those things are not extras, they are part of my daily life.

When I train, eat well, and stay focused, I'm sharper in the galley. I make better decisions, I stay calmer, I'm more present.

Mental health is something we need to talk about more in yachting. The pressure is high, the environment can be intense, and there's not always space to speak about it. I want to be

part of the changes to this. In the future, I'll be a stronger voice for helping create better conditions for chefs onboard and showing that looking after yourself is part of being a professional, not a weakness. I can't say too much now but things are happening behind the scenes.

#### **Restaurant chef vs yacht chef?**

Danny: Completely different.



In a restaurant, you have structure, a team, and systems. On a yacht, you are the system. You're managing everything, menus, provisioning, logistics, guests, crew, expectations and often doing it alone.

But that's also what makes it special.

It's more personal. You're cooking in real environments, creating moments that people remember. Fresh fish caught that day, meals that match the setting, experiences that feel natural. It's demanding, but it's rewarding in a different way.

#### **The future of culinary?**

Danny: I think it's going in two directions.

There will be more technology, more innovation, more efficiency. But at the same time, people are craving authenticity more than ever. Real food, real stories, real connection.

The chefs who succeed will be the ones who can balance both, embracing progress without losing the human side of cooking.

And I think the industry needs to evolve in how it treats chefs. Better conversations around wellbeing, sustainability of careers, and long-term development.

#### **Your plans for the future?**

Danny: To keep building, but in a bigger way.

I'll always cook, but I want to contribute more beyond the galley. Hosting competitions, mentorship, media, storytelling, those are all areas I'm focused on now. I want to help develop chefs' careers, create opportunities, and give something back to the industry.

Through Behind the Line with Chef Danny Davies, I also want to show the real side of this profession, the pressure, the pride, the people behind it all. And I want to continue pushing conversations around mental health and professional standards onboard superyachts.

#### **Your favourite food?**

Danny: Simple food done properly. Beautiful fish, a good steak, fresh vegetables, great ingredients cooked with respect. Food that feels honest.

#### **Your favourite food to cook?**

Danny: Birthday cake. It's technical, you have to make it without them knowing, sneaky, I like that. It's personal, plus, when you bring it out with the candles lit and all their loved ones singing, it's such a precious moment. I like creating those moments of celebration.

More than anything, I enjoy cooking for people, creating food that brings everyone together, whether it's a relaxed meal or something more refined, making memories makes me happy.

#### **Final Reflection**

When I look back, it's been a journey built on discipline, resilience, and growth.

From cooking in the military, where I learned structure and pressure, to superyachts where



every day demands adaptability and consistency, I've seen a lot of sides of this industry. Now, I find myself in a position where I'm not just cooking, but representing the profession. Judging and hosting yacht chef competitions around the world, working with other chefs, and telling our stories through Behind the Line with Chef Danny Davies. And that's what it comes down to for me. Cooking gave me a place in the world. It gave me direction. It gave me experiences I would never have had otherwise. And now it's about using that experience to help build something better. Because the journey doesn't stop. It just evolves.





Chef Michael Powell  
"I refused to lose"

I grew up in the UK, raised by Jamaican parents who taught me resilience, pride, and the importance of carving your own path. At 18, I stepped into the kitchen for the first time—not just to cook, but to begin building something of my own. I completed my apprenticeship, and by 22, in 1992, I made a bold decision that would shape my life: I left everything familiar behind and moved to Australia. There was no internet back then. No network. No safety net. No friends waiting for me. Just me, a dream, and a knife in my hand.

For 18 months, I worked across different kitchens in Australia, learning, adapting, and pushing myself further with every service. Visa restrictions eventually brought me back to the UK for a short time, but I wasn't done exploring. I moved to Greece, where I spent just over a year working and growing, before returning once again to Australia in 1995—this time with even more hunger to succeed. In Melbourne, I found my footing, working at the Rydges Hotel alongside two British chefs. I stayed there for five years, refining my craft and building my confidence, before making another leap—this time to Sydney. That move changed everything.

I began working at the prestigious Royal Motor Yacht Club, a place that elevated my career to another level. From there, I moved through catering roles and eventually became head chef in Alexandria at the Parkview—a vibrant, trendy spot where pressure was constant and expectations were high.

I was told to make it happen—or else.

So I did.

I embraced the challenge, built strong relationships with my team, and created a kitchen culture rooted in trust and respect. I connected with members, guests, and even well-known faces who passed through. Most importantly, I stayed true to myself—cooking the kind of food I believed in.



At the Parkview, we earned recognition in the Good Pub Guide three years in a row, receiving outstanding reviews. One year, we were even nominated for Best Mains under \$20, and attending the awards was a moment I'll never forget. To have critics come in, taste your food, and appreciate it—that feeling is something special.

It wasn't easy. There were long days, exhaustion, and moments where walking away might have seemed like the easier option. But giving up was never on the table. I refused to lose.

Music became my fuel—something that kept my spirit strong and my passion alive. It reminded me why I started and pushed me forward, especially when others doubted me or expected me to fail. That only made me more determined to succeed.

Along the way, I also worked across some of Sydney's top venues as an agency chef, gaining experience, sharpening my skills, and continuing to build my name.

Looking ahead, I see the culinary world evolving—becoming more sustainable, more thoughtful, less complicated. Food is moving toward smaller, more refined portions, with a growing focus on experience, functions, and events. It's an exciting future.

And I'm still here, still driven, still creating—because this journey was never just about cooking.

It was about believing in myself.





# RESTAURANTS



**Oldest restaurants  
in the World**  
By Julija Toth.



Nearly a thousand years ago, during the Song Dynasty (960–1279), something remarkable was already happening in Kaifeng and Hangzhou, two great cities of China. While much of the world still ate at home or in simple inns with fixed meals, these cities were buzzing with places that looked surprisingly like modern restaurants. Imagine walking through lively streets filled with merchants, travelers, scholars, and families. Lantern light glows on wooden doors, steam rises into the evening air, and the scent of fried dishes, fresh noodles, and tea pulls you inside. And then — something new for that time — you could choose. Some establishments had written menus. Others displayed sample dishes so guests could simply point to what they wanted. There were elegant dining houses for the wealthy, cheerful taverns full of laughter, tea houses for conversation, and humble noodle shops feeding everyday workers. Inside, trained servers moved quickly between tables. Orders were sometimes called out to the kitchen in rhythmic, almost musical voices — part efficiency, part performance. Specialized chefs prepared cold dishes, fried specialties, roasted meats, and delicate soups, sending plates out in carefully planned sequences. Menus could list dozens, even hundreds of options — pork, duck, seafood, vegetables, noodles, seasonal delicacies. The wealthy enjoyed elaborate banquets, while ordinary people found comfort in rice, pork, and salted fish. Different lives, same human pleasure: sitting down to eat something made with care. Food was also seen as balance — hot and cold, rich and light — influenced by philosophical ideas about harmony in the body and nature. There are even signs that restaurants competed for reputation, using banners or flags — early ancestors of today’s ratings and awards. So when we sit in a restaurant today, browsing a menu and waiting for our order, we’re actually participating in a tradition that began over thousands of years ago — in the vibrant streets of Song Dynasty China, between the years 960 and 1279.

And somehow, across the centuries, the feeling is still the same:  
welcome in, sit down, enjoy.



The story of Hamdi Ugur,  
owner of  
Porterhouse Steakhouse

<https://www.porterhousesanmateo.com/>



I was born in Kurdistan. My childhood was simple, but it was not easy. When I was still very young, my people were forced to run—Kurdish families scattered, trying to survive. By the time I was six or seven years old, I had already seen more hardship than most children ever should.

When I started school, we were forced to learn Turkish. It was not our language, but we had no choice. Life was about adapting, surviving, and moving forward.

As I grew older, I left home. I went first to Istanbul, and then, at around seventeen years old, I made my way to London. I was still just a boy—I hadn't even shaved yet—but I was ready to work.

My first job was as a dishwasher in London, in Piccadilly. From there, I worked my way up step by step—prep cook, busboy, grillman, waiter. I did whatever I had to do. I worked hard, and I learned everything I could.

In 1980, I came to America. Six months later, I found a job as a cook in San Mateo at a Hoffbrau restaurant. I cooked turkey, pastrami, corned beef, cabbage, and made sandwiches. I worked for \$85 a week, while paying \$325 a month in rent. Many days, I could only afford one or two meals. But I never gave up.

After two years, I asked one of my customers for an opportunity. That chance led me to a French continental restaurant called Bogie's. They hired me as a waiter. On my very first night, I made \$85 in tips. I couldn't believe it. I had never seen that kind of money before. I was so happy I couldn't sleep. I worked harder than ever—80 hours a week. I opened dinners, worked lunches, took every shift I could. They only paid me for 30 hours every two weeks, but I never complained. Some nights, I made \$200 or \$300 in tips. To me, that was the American Dream.

I bought a condominium. I got married. I had a car. Life felt beautiful.

Then my wife became pregnant. I was young, alone in a new country, and afraid. I didn't understand insurance, and people told me having a baby would cost a lot of money. I asked my boss for help, trusting him. The next day, they fired me.

Suddenly, I had a mortgage, a pregnant wife, and no job.



I went through three jobs, but none felt right. Then I found a job at a restaurant in North Beach. The owner, an Italian man named Lorenzo Petrini, gave me a chance. He provided Kaiser insurance, better pay, and a schedule that allowed me to spend time with my family. I will never forget that.

Six months later, my old boss came into the restaurant. He was sick. He sat with me, gave me big tips, and asked me to come back. I refused. He came again. And again. Four times.

By then, I had become confident—maybe even a little cocky. I told him, “If you want to sell the restaurant, I will buy it. Otherwise, please don’t bother me.”

The next time he came, he shook my hand and said, “\$165,000.”

I gave him a \$20,000 deposit check. I quit my job. My boss warned me: “You are too young. You don’t have experience.” But I told him, “I shook hands. I cannot go back. I must go forward.”

At first, they tried to back out of the deal. I was heartbroken. I stayed home, spending my savings, unsure what to do. Then finally, they agreed. I had to raise the rest of the money.

In one day, I raised \$150,000 from friends and customers who believed in me. People trusted me. I didn’t even fully understand escrow or contracts—I came from a village where I first saw electricity and cars at the age of twelve. We were farmers. We raised animals. We were self-sufficient.

But I believed in myself.

When I finally took over the restaurant, there was almost no business. Some days, not a single customer walked in. So I went out into the streets. I handed out my business card to every shop, every person. I asked for support.

And the American people supported me.

In my first year, I made \$300,000 in sales. The second year, over \$600,000. The third year, over \$1 million. It was unbelievable.

But success is never easy. After four years, the landlord went bankrupt, and I lost everything because I didn’t understand the lease. That mistake cost me dearly.

Still, I started again.

In the same location, I rebuilt. Years later, around 2006, business slowed during the economic downturn. A successful customer advised me to change the concept—to modernize, to adapt to a new generation in Silicon Valley.

So I changed the restaurant’s name to Porterhouse.

Business improved again. Thank God.

The restaurant business is very hard. I always say—you should recommend it to your enemy, not your friend. It keeps you too busy to bother anyone.

I worked seven days a week. Dinner service only. During the day, I played golf. I loved my life—but I also loved travel, and the restaurant made that difficult. An owner cannot be absent.

I learned one important truth: you must love what you do. If you only work for money, you will fail.



I love food. I love French cuisine. I love the grill. I love tableside cooking—crêpes Suzette, cherries jubilee, bananas Foster. I love Italian food too. For me, dining is not just eating—it is an experience. Atmosphere, wine, conversation—these matter.

When I was a child, I never imagined I would one day live in Istanbul, London, or America. I never dreamed I would own a restaurant, serve millionaires and billionaires, or become friends with them. Now I have a home. I have four children. My life is full.

One thing about me—I never blame others. I only blame myself. That is how I move forward.

I never forced religion on my children. I told them: when you turn 18, you choose your own path. I made my choices—I will not make theirs.

I worry about the future of the restaurant industry. We are losing communication, respect, and manners. People rush. They eat fast. They choose convenience over experience. Even days like Valentine's Day have changed—less elegance, less meaning.

I hope one day we remember what it means to be human again.

I love traveling—to Eastern Europe, Asia, Latin America. I love meeting people, sharing ideas, experiencing culture, music, and food. I wish I had more time for that.

Still, I am proud of what I built.

Many people from my community came to me. I helped them. I trained them. Today, they own hundreds of restaurants. I was one of the first, and I opened the door.

Sometimes ten people would sleep in my house. Thirty people would come to my restaurant, and I would feed them all.

I sacrificed a lot. Not everyone appreciates it—but that's life. When you help people, sometimes they forget. Sometimes they even turn against you.

But I don't care.

My conscience is clean. I sleep like a baby. I am healthy. I am strong. I keep moving forward.

I live my life as if I will never die. And when the time comes—I will accept it.



## PORTERHOUSE MENUS

Our Menus Feature the Finest Mid  
West Steaks | Dry Aged In-House

### DAILY MENUS

DINNER MENU  
LOUNGE MENU  
HAPPY HOUR MENU  
DESSERT MENU  
WINE LIST

### PRIVATE DINING BANQUET MENUS

3 COURSE SET MENUS  
4 COURSE SET MENUS  
PASSED HORS D'OEUVRES





CHEFS

and

RECIPES



**Chef and food columnist  
Paul Watters**

Ever since I was a child—around eight or nine years old—I found myself drawn to the kitchen. I was fascinated watching my grandmother cook. She could turn the simplest ingredients into something unforgettable: homemade soups simmering gently, rich stews full of flavor, fresh bread baked from scratch. I would stand there, watching closely, completely absorbed. At the same time, I'd watch cooking shows on TV and think to myself, *\*that could be me one day.\**

When I left school, I decided to follow that feeling and become a chef. My first step wasn't glamorous—I worked in a local hotel peeling what felt like endless sacks of potatoes. But it didn't put me off. If anything, it fueled me. It gave me the drive and hunger to keep going.

At around 21, I began working in a five-star hotel in London. That was the moment everything became real. I finally understood the true magnitude and pressure of being a chef. It was intense, demanding, and relentless—but I thrived on it. The pressure and hard work didn't scare me; they shaped me and prepared me for the future I wanted.

I've always loved cooking all kinds of cuisines, especially when using fresh, local ingredients. Over time, I've learned that the real secret to great food is simplicity. Whether it's Irish, Italian, Greek, or Asian cuisine, you should never overcomplicate it. Let the ingredients speak for themselves.

One place that had a lasting impact on me was working at The Savoy in London. It gave me real insight into what it takes to become a chef—not just in skill, but in mindset. It taught me how to think like a chef, how to perform under pressure, and how to grow into the role. Whether you're working in a small restaurant or a five-star hotel, the challenge is always there. You have to understand your audience and constantly push yourself to perform at a higher level.

I think it's great that there are so many cooking shows on TV today. They give both chefs and viewers the chance to explore different styles, personalities, and cuisines. From Michelin-starred chefs to street food vendors, there's something for everyone—and at the end of the day, we all share one thing: a love of food.



The path for young chefs today is quite different from when I started. Many in the younger generation are less willing to work the long hours, weekends, and late nights for low pay. But for those who are willing to learn the trade and commit to it, the journey can be incredibly rewarding—and, hopefully, successful. For me, it's always about improvement. How can I get better? How can I develop further? I'm constantly learning, and I've come to respect and appreciate every step of the process that goes into creating a great meal.

I've had many favorite dishes over the years, but the one that stands out most is the family meal. There's something special about food bringing people together. That's what truly matters—connection, warmth, and shared moments.

I'm especially passionate about seafood. I love making a rich seafood chowder or experimenting with fusion cooking. I enjoy working with spices—curry powder, smoked paprika, harissa—creating bold, new flavors and unique combinations.

Of course, not every day in the kitchen is smooth. During a busy service, anything can go wrong—a gas issue, running out of ingredients, or dealing with an unhappy customer. In those moments, you sometimes stop and think, *\*what am I doing, and why am I doing this?\**

But over time, I've learned how to manage stress better. Planning, preparation, and organization are everything. I firmly believe that a chef who shouts and screams is simply unorganized and unprofessional. A good kitchen runs on respect, teamwork, and calm under pressure.

And finally, I think it's important for people to understand and appreciate that good food takes time. It's not something that can be rushed. Real, quality cooking is a process—and good food truly comes to those who wait.



## Recipes

By

Chef Paul Watters

Prawn and pumpkin chowder



- 400 g pumpkin or butternut squash, peeled and diced
- 1 tbsp olive oil or butter
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 medium potato, peeled and diced (for thickness)
- 1 tsp smoked paprika
- ½ tsp turmeric or ground cumin



# Chefs. Dishes. Restaurants

*magazine*

*Where Food Becomes Memory*

(optional, for warmth)

750 ml vegetable/chicken or fish stock

200 ml double cream (or single cream for lighter)

250–300 g raw king prawns, peeled and deveined

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Juice of ½ lemon

Small handful flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped

To Serve (optional)

Crusty bread or warm flatbread

Extra cream and black pepper

Method

Heat the olive oil or butter in a large saucepan over medium heat.

Add the onion and cook gently for 5 minutes until soft but not coloured.

Add flavour

Stir in the garlic, smoked paprika and curry powder (if using). Cook for 1 minute until fragrant.

Cook the vegetables

Add the pumpkin and potato, season lightly with salt and pepper, then pour in the stock.

Bring to a gentle simmer and cook for 15–20 minutes until everything is very tender.

Blend

Finish the chowder

Stir in the cream and return to a gentle simmer.

Add the prawns and cook for 2–3 minutes until just pink and tender.

Final seasoning

Add lemon juice, taste, and adjust seasoning.

To Serve

Ladle into warm bowls, drizzle with a little extra cream, finish with freshly chopped flat-leaf parsley and cracked black pepper. Serve with crusty bread on the side.



Pork Meatballs with caramelised Apple and beetroot salad



#### Ingredients

- 500g lean pork mince
- 1 small onion, (peeled)very finely diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 50g fresh breadcrumbs
- 1 egg
- 1 tsp wholegrain mustard/Dijon mustard
- 1 tsp fresh thyme (or ½ tsp dried)
- 1 tbsp chopped parsley
- Salt & cracked black pepper
- 1 tbsp olive oil (for frying)

#### Method:



Sweat the onion gently in a little oil until soft — cool completely.

Mix pork, cooled onion, garlic, breadcrumbs, egg, mustard, thyme, parsley, salt and pepper.

Roll into golf ball-sized meatballs.

Heat oil in a pan. Sear meatballs on all sides until golden.

Finish in oven at 180°C for 8–10 minutes (core temp 75°C).

#### Caramelised Apples

2 firm apples (Braeburn or Pink Lady), sliced into wedges

1 tbsp butter

1 tsp brown sugar

1 splash apple cider vinegar

Pinch salt

Small pinch cinnamon (optional but works beautifully)

#### Method

Melt butter in pan over medium heat.

Add apples cut side down. Cook until golden.

Sprinkle brown sugar and let caramelize.

Deglaze lightly with cider vinegar.

Finish with pinch salt.

They should be soft but still hold shape — glossy, not mushy.

#### Beetroot Salad with Cinnamon Sprinkle

3 cooked beetroot, sliced

Handful mixed leaves (rocket works great)

1 small fennel bulb, thinly sliced (optional but lifts the dish)

6–8 cherry tomatoes, halved

1 tbsp toasted seeds (olive or sunflower oil)

#### Dressing

2 tbsp olive oil

1 tbsp red wine vinegar

1 tsp honey

Salt & pepper

Whisk together.

#### Finish



Light dusting of cinnamon over beetroot only

Optional: pinch smoked paprika and cinamon around plate rim for presentation

Dress leaves lightly — don't drown them.

Build salad base.

Stack meatballs slightly offset.

Tuck caramelised apple between.

Finish with fresh parsley.

Light cinnamon dust over beetroot. Garnish with a sprig of flat leaf parsley



# SUSHI CORNER



## Short history of Sushi

By Julija Toth



Sushi, as we know it today — elegant, delicate, sometimes intimidatingly perfect — actually began as something much more... practical. And slightly questionable.

More than a thousand years ago, somewhere along the Mekong River, people needed a way to keep fish from spoiling. Refrigerators did not exist. Delivery apps did not exist. So they did what humans have always done: they got creative. Fish was salted, packed in fermented rice, and left to sit for months. The rice fermented, preserved the fish... and then was thrown away. Yes. Imagine cooking rice for months just to toss it. Early sushi was basically “keep the fish, forget the carbs.”

This preservation method slowly traveled to Japan around the 8th century, where it became known as narezushi. Over time, people began thinking, “Wait... maybe we don’t need to wait months?” By the Muromachi period, they started eating the rice too, while fermentation was still incomplete. Progress. Efficiency. Hunger usually drives innovation.

Then came the real revolution during the Edo period (1603–1867), in Edo — the bustling city that we now know as Tokyo. The city was growing fast, people were busy, and nobody had time to wait half a year for lunch. So chefs began using vinegar to mimic the sourness of fermentation instantly. This was hayazushi — “fast sushi.” Finally, sushi for people with schedules.

And in the 19th century, one man — Hanaya Yohei — changed everything. He shaped small balls of vinegared rice by hand and topped them with fresh fish. Nigiri. Simple. Quick. Portable. Basically the street food of its time — the ancient version of grabbing something on the go, just significantly more photogenic.

From there, sushi kept evolving. Refrigeration made fresh fish safer. Chefs spread techniques across Japan after disasters forced migration. By the 1960s it reached the United States, where creativity exploded — including the famous California roll, created partly for people who were still nervous about raw fish. (A very understandable fear, honestly.)



## Chef Yoshio Minami



### Early Life & Inspiration

I am originally from Peru, and my childhood was strongly influenced by food and culture. Growing up, I was always surrounded by flavors, especially seafood, which is very important in Peruvian cuisine. When I was a child, I didn't have a clear idea of becoming a chef. Like many kids, I had different dreams, but I always felt connected to cooking without realizing it at the time.

### Becoming a Chef

My decision to become a chef came from my passion for food and the desire to create something meaningful for others. Working in kitchens and seeing how food can bring people together was a big inspiration. Over time, I became especially interested in Japanese cuisine and sushi because of its precision, discipline, and respect for ingredients.

### Career Journey

I have been working as a chef for several years, continuously learning and improving my skills. I have had the opportunity to work in different environments, and each place has taught me something valuable. One of my favorite experiences has been working in Japan, where I could truly understand the philosophy behind sushi.

One of my most memorable moments in the kitchen was serving a dish that made a guest genuinely happy—that kind of reaction reminds me why I chose this profession.

On the other hand, one of the most challenging moments has been working under high pressure during busy service hours. It can be intense, but it also helps you grow and stay focused.

### Sushi Around the World

I think it's amazing to see sushi becoming popular all over the world. It shows how powerful and universal food can be.

At the same time, I believe that respecting tradition is very important. Sushi is not just about ingredients—it's about technique, history, and mindset.



Experimentation is natural in cuisine, but when the essence—like balance, simplicity, and respect for the fish—is lost, it may no longer be true sushi.

I don't think only Japanese chefs should make sushi, but I do believe that anyone who prepares it should deeply respect its origins and train seriously.

### **Evolution of Sushi**

Since I started my career, I've seen sushi become more global and creative. There are more fusion styles now, and more accessibility worldwide. However, traditional sushi still remains the foundation and should always be respected.

### **The Future of Sushi**

I believe the future of sushi will combine tradition and innovation. Sustainability will also become very important, especially regarding seafood. Chefs will need to adapt while preserving the essence of sushi.

### **Personal Taste**

My favorite food to eat is seafood, especially dishes that remind me of my roots, like ceviche.

My favorite dish to cook is sushi, because it requires precision, concentration, and care in every detail.

### **Advice for Young Chefs**

My advice would be: be patient, stay humble, and never stop learning. Becoming a sushi chef takes time, discipline, and respect for the craft. Focus on mastering the basics before trying to innovate.

### **Reflection**

I believe success is not only about recognition but about continuous growth and consistency. I still consider myself a learner, and for me, success means improving every day and making people happy through my food.



### Looking Ahead

In the future, I hope to continue growing as a chef, learning more about sushi and other cuisines, and possibly sharing my own style and experience with others.





FUTURE STARS

of

CULINARY



**Chef Jhon Carlo Bulayog:  
The Art of the Natural Bloom**

“Pastry is my way of sharing happiness with the world—  
one dessert, one flavor, and one smile at a time.”



I was raised in the Philippines, in a life that could be described as simple, yet quietly comfortable. But beneath that simplicity, something powerful was taking root. When I lost my father at a young age—a man who served as a Chief of Military—I came to understand that true strength does not always speak loudly. Sometimes, it lives in silence, in resilience, in the ability to keep moving forward.

It was my mother who carried that strength into our future. Her courage to work abroad became the turning point of my life. In her sacrifice, she planted the earliest seeds of my ambition. Long before I could see it myself, she recognized a spark of creativity within me. Everything I have become is, in many ways, a continuation of her belief.

As I grew, that spark demanded discipline. My journey as a scholar was not easy—it was shaped by focus, long hours, and an unwavering commitment to excellence. Graduating Magna Cum Laude, along with earning multiple certifications, allowed me to truly understand what I now call the “Silent Noise” of the kitchen. It is the unspoken rhythm of precision, the quiet chemistry between ingredients, and the patience required to transform technique into perfection .

In time, I moved beyond instinct. I found mastery. And in that mastery, I discovered freedom—the kind that allows art to truly bloom.

Nature became my greatest teacher. I found inspiration in its honesty—the raw textures, the balance of colors, the effortless harmony. I began to create desserts that reflect this openness, this sense of calm expression. Among all ingredients, I am most drawn to chocolate and vanilla. To me, chocolate is a storyteller—deep, intense, and endlessly expressive. Vanilla, on the other hand, is the soul—warm, elegant, and quietly powerful. When treated with respect and crafted with care, these humble elements transcend simplicity and become something extraordinary.

This philosophy lives fully in my signature concept, \*White Silent Noise\*. It is more than a dessert—it is a reflection of a journey. The “Noise” represents the unseen effort, the sacrifices, the relentless pursuit of growth. The “White” is the peace that follows—the moment a dream finally finds its place in the world.

Looking ahead, my vision extends beyond the plate. I hope to guide a new generation of pastry chefs toward a more mindful and responsible craft—one that honors local producers, embraces sustainability,



and values authenticity. Because for me, the perfect dessert is not only beautiful—it is honest. It connects. It arrives at the right moment, just as it is meant to.

Now, at 33, I stand at a point where global inspiration meets technical mastery. I currently serve as Executive Pastry Chef at Casa Myrra (Demind Group) within the Novotel Riyadh, leading a passionate, high-performing team in the vibrant heart of Saudi Arabia.

Yet, my journey continues to be guided by something deeper—a search for my professional North Star. I envision a fine-dining sanctuary where elegance meets soul, where creativity flows freely, and where teams are built not just on skill, but on trust, emotional intelligence, and shared purpose.

In my ideal kitchen, the air is gently scented with pure vanilla, and the only sound is that familiar, comforting rhythm—the silent noise of a team working in perfect harmony.

As a chef, I remain open to the world. I carry with me a tapestry of international techniques and cultural influences, weaving them into every creation. Each dessert I craft is more than a dish—it is a journey. A story. A quiet moment of connection between the heart, the hands, and the world itself.





CULINARY

PHOTOGRAPHY



Food and Culinary  
Art photographer  
Syukoc  
<https://syukoc.net/>



**Did you dream of becoming a photographer since you were little? Or did you have a different dream as a child?**

I've only really started holding a camera, or even becoming a photographer, in the last five years or so. When I was little, my dream was to become a chef. That dream changed to something else once I got my license.

**When you started your career as a photographer, did you immediately choose food photography or cooking photography? Or did you start in a different field?**

I started taking pictures five years ago, and I've only been working as a professional photographer for the last three years or so. Before that, I only took pictures as a hobby and didn't even really know how to use a camera (laughs). I originally picked up a camera because I wanted to take pictures of my dog. Even so, I started taking photography seriously to take food photos.

**Why did you choose cooking and food as your main theme? Many people say that "food culture" is a relatively new phenomenon these days, do you think so?**

The first thing I photographed was pudding. I used to work at a facility that provides disability welfare services. My job involved making and selling sweets made by people with disabilities. That's where the need to photograph the products came from, and that's how I started food photography.

**I read about your philosophy, and I found it very profound and unique. Could you explain your philosophy to our readers in your own words?**

My philosophy is a fusion of the Japanese aesthetic of "Bi" (beauty): shadow and silence\*\*\* and the Latin word "Lume" (light).

Like 17th-century Dutch still-life paintings or "chiaroscuro" (the use of light and shadow), I don't want to illuminate the subject with strong light, but rather depict the "soul of the ingredients" that exists within the deep shadows. My photographs are not just food photographs; they are "stories of light that speak in silence."

**You've won more than 10 awards for your cooking and food photography; that's amazing. How did you feel when you received your first award?**



When I received my first award, I couldn't believe it. I had only been taking photos for about a year at the time.

**And now, what are your thoughts on awards? Do you still get excited about them? Or have they become a part of your daily life?**

Currently, the awards themselves are not the goal, but I still get excited when I feel that my expression has reached the world. It's not a "daily routine," but rather a "quiet passion fuel" that keeps me constantly updating myself.

**How do you perceive success? Do you measure or define success by any specific criteria?**

For me, success isn't about numbers or titles, but about "the moment when a single photograph stirs the viewer's five senses". When someone looks at a photo and goes beyond the word "looks delicious," and feels the story and temperature behind the dish, that's when I feel truly successful.

**How do you see the future of culinary art and food culture?**

I believe that precisely because of the increasing digitalization, there will be a greater demand for "essential, tangible beauty." Food photography will evolve from a mere means of conveying information to a "pure art" that soothes and inspires people's hearts.

**What are your thoughts on the globalization of sushi? Do you think sushi should only be made by Japanese chefs?**

Sushi is now a universal language. I don't think it should only be made by Japanese chefs. Rather, I hope that new forms of beauty will emerge when people from different cultural backgrounds engage with sushi. Just as art knows no borders, food should also be free.

**Do you cook? If so, what is your favorite dish?**

As I mentioned in the first question, I have a chef's license, so I can cook to a certain extent, but I enjoy cooking for others the most. Therefore, I don't have a favorite dish.

**What is your favorite food?**

I think the food in Japan is truly delicious. Among them, perhaps because I'm Japanese, onigiri (rice balls) are one of my favorites.

**What are your future plans?**

In the future, I hope to make my work known to many people and, based on my philosophy, capture many fleeting moments of art in a single photograph. In mid-April, I plan to exhibit my work at a photography exhibition at an art museum in Nagoya, Japan, with a group that I'm studying photography with. In addition, I post about five works a week on Instagram. I want to continue my activities so that I can capture the ephemeral art of cooking in an eternal photograph.



Photo Art by Syukoc

