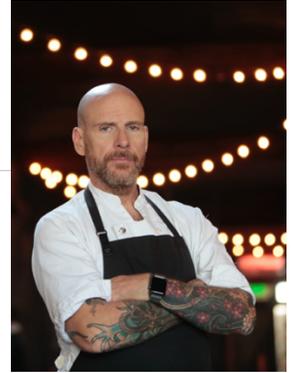


Darren Norris

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Executive Chef and Food & Beverage leader with 30+ years of experience across award-winning restaurants, luxury hotels, large-scale catering, and owner-operated concepts. Proven track record leading multi-unit operations, managing high-volume teams, and driving financial performance while maintaining culinary excellence.

James Beard Foundation Semifinalist & Washingtonian Magazine Restaurateur of the Year.

EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE:

Owner / Culinary & Beverage Director, [Shibuya Eatery](#), [Death Punch Bar](#) (sold bar 10/25)

2019 - Present, Washington DC / Chevy Chase, MD

- Founded and launched multiple full-service restaurants, bar concept and music venue from initial concept through opening, overseeing site selection, branding, menu development, and operational execution.
- Led the expansion into fast-casual (Shibuya Eatery 2.0), adapting menus, systems, and staffing models for high-volume service
- Directed day-to-day operations across front- and back-of-house, including staffing, scheduling, inventory management, food and beverage purchasing, and vendor negotiations
- Built, trained, and led teams of up to 30 employees, establishing performance standards and accountability across departments
- Developed and managed budgets, pricing strategies, and cost controls to support profitability and sustainable growth
- Designed and executed comprehensive beverage programs (wine, spirits, craft cocktails), including purchasing strategy, inventory control, and staff training
- *Recognition: Only Maryland restaurant featured in Eater DC's Best New Restaurant List (October 2025).*
- *Washingtonian Magazine's 25 Best New Restaurants of 2021; Featured in Washington Post, Spring Dining Guide 2021. 25 Most Exciting New Restaurants, Eater DC 2020*

Owner / Culinary & Beverage Director, [Black Whiskey](#), Washington, DC 05/2013 – Present

- Founded, developed, and launched an independent restaurant and bar concept, overseeing concept development, design, and operational execution
- Directed day-to-day operations including staffing, scheduling, inventory, purchasing and vendor negotiations
- Developed and managed budgets, pricing strategies, and cost controls; oversaw P&L performance and operating expenses
- Led all food and beverage costing, menu pricing, and margin management to support consistent profitability
- Designed and executed the full beverage program, including wine, spirits, and craft cocktails
- Managed all beverage purchasing and vendor relationships; oversaw all bar operations and service standards

- Created original cocktail menus from scratch, utilizing craft techniques such as house-made syrups, bitters, and shrubs

Owner & Culinary Director, [Maki Shop](#), Washington, DC 04/2015 – 2017

- Created and launched a restaurant startup, developing the business model, brand identity, and core operational infrastructure
- Secured financing and managed budgets, cash flow, and early-stage financial controls
- Built scalable operational workflows to support consistency, efficiency, and growth

Director of Culinary Operations / Executive Chef, [Main Event Caterers](#), Arlington, VA 10/2015 – 10/2016

- Led culinary operations for a **\$11.5M full-service catering company**, redesigning all core menus and partnering with sales to develop customized client offerings
- Increased tasting-to-booking conversion rate from **55% to 90%**, significantly improving sales performance
- Supervised and developed a culinary team of **50 staff**, managing labor deployment to maintain targeted labor percentages
- Implemented standardized SOPs across purchasing, receiving, distribution, sanitation, and safety
- Improved food cost controls to **25%** and developed comprehensive **HACCP plans** across culinary operations

Owner / Executive Chef, [Kushi Izakaya & Sushi](#), Washington, DC 03/2010 – 09/2014

- [JAMES BEARD SEMI FINALIST](#), BEST NEW RESTAURANT IN AMERICA (2010)
- RESTAURATEUR OF THE YEAR - WASHINGTONIAN MAGAZINE (2011)
- Pioneered Washington, DC's first izakaya-style restaurant concept, leading all menu development, interior and kitchen design, and collaborating with architects and contractors through construction, buildout, and opening
- Recruited, hired, trained, and led a team of **40+ employees**, establishing culinary and service standards from launch

Executive Chef, [Ridgewells Caterers](#), Bethesda, MD 10/2005 – 02/2009

- Led culinary operations for the **largest and highest-grossing fine catering company in the Washington, DC metropolitan area**, generating **\$42M+ in annual sales**
- Directed a culinary organization of **60 full-time kitchen staff** and **200+ event staff**, overseeing staffing, production, and execution at scale
- Maintained industry-leading cost controls, with **average food cost of 23.5%** and **labor at 14%**
- Created and refreshed all core menus while developing customized client offerings across a wide range of high-end events
- Oversaw food styling and presentation for print and marketing campaigns, with work published in local and national outlets

Culinary Consultant, [Creative Cuisine Catering](#), Boca Raton, FL 06/2005 – 09/2005

- Provided culinary and operational consulting for a **high-end catering company with \$4.5M+ in annual sales**
- Developed customized menus, standardized recipes, and detailed menu costing to ensure consistency and margin control
- Prepared capital and operating budgets and reinforced sanitation and food safety standards

Chef de Cuisine, [Scalini Fedeli](#), New York, NY 03/2004 – 06/2005

- Led execution of a **nine-course prix fixe tasting menu** at one of New York City's most acclaimed Italian fine-dining restaurants, consistently ranked among the city's top destinations during tenure
- Supported culinary operations for an **85-seat restaurant generating approximately \$4.5M in annual sales**, maintaining quality, consistency, and execution at the highest level

Creative Director / Executive Chef, [Jeffrey Chodorow Restaurant Group](#) / [Ian Schrager Company](#) / [China Grill](#)

CBS Building 6th Ave & 53rd Street New York, NY 01/2003 – 02/2004

- Directed culinary operations for a **high-profile flagship restaurant in Midtown Manhattan**, generating approximately **\$14M in annual sales**
- Led menu development in collaboration with China Grill executive chefs across **Miami, Las Vegas, and Mexico City**, ensuring brand consistency and culinary standards across markets
- Managed and developed a culinary team of **50+ kitchen staff** within a full-service, high-volume operation
- Oversaw menu development, recipe standardization, detailed costing, and quality control across all offerings
- Conducted operational and financial audits of sister properties, identifying efficiencies and improving cost controls
- Assisted in budget development and managed key financial metrics, including **P&L performance, labor reporting, and food cost**
- Successfully reduced food costs by **8%**, increasing overall profit margins
- Implemented operational policies, procedures, and food safety standards in compliance with New York State regulations

Executive Chef, [Perry's Restaurant](#), Washington, DC 2000 – 2002

- Directed culinary operations for a high-volume restaurant, ensuring consistency, quality, and profitability
- Led kitchen teams, menu execution, and cost controls within a fast-paced, full-service environment

Executive Chef, [Embassy of Greece](#), Washington, DC 1998 – 2000

- Directed culinary and service operations for the Ambassador of Greece and diplomatic guests, designing bespoke menus and executing formal events requiring cultural fluency, discretion, and protocol-level service

Executive Sous Chef, [Knightsbridge Restaurant Group](#), [Oval Room](#), Washington, DC 1996– 1998

- Served as senior culinary leader for an award-winning restaurant under renowned restaurateur Ashok Bajaj, supporting daily operations and execution for a **\$7M+ annual revenue** unit

Executive Sous Chef, [National Press Club](#), *Multi-Unit Food and Beverage Operation*, Washington, DC, 1994 – 1996

- Managed culinary operations for two restaurants and banquet services within a large, member-focused private club
- Supported high-profile events and daily service requiring consistency, discretion, and operational discipline

Executive Sous Chef, Red Sage, Washington, DC 1993 – 1994

- Served as Executive Sous Chef for **Mark Miller's flagship Red Sage**, leading daily culinary operations within a high-profile restaurant generating **\$12M+ in annual sales**

Executive Chef, Hotel Washington, Washington, DC 1990 – 1993

- Led culinary operations for a **multi-unit restaurant portfolio within a full-service hotel**, overseeing menu development, execution, and quality standards across all outlets
- Directed and mentored a **60-person culinary team** across multiple concepts, establishing systems for consistency and performance
- Managed food and labor budgets, inventory controls, and purchasing, achieving a **15% cost reduction** while maintaining target margins
- Partnered with hotel leadership and F&B management to align culinary strategy with guest experience and revenue objectives

Sous Chef, PGA Tour Club / TPC Club at Eagle Trace, Coral Springs, FL 1988 – 1990

- Supervised culinary teams delivering **member-focused dining and banquet operations** within a private club environment

EDUCATION:

Southern California Institute of the Arts, Laguna Beach, CA, 1988

California Culinary Institute, Santa Monica, CA, 1988

University of South Florida, Tampa, FL, 1985

CORE COMPETENCIES:

- Multi-Unit Culinary Operations
- Food & Beverage Leadership
- P&L Management & Cost Controls
- High-Volume & Fine Dining Concepts
- Team Development & Organizational Leadership
- Menu Development & Concept Launch
- Beverage Program Design & Oversight