



Louisiana On His Mind

Chef-Owner David Guas Channels the Culture of his Beloved South

For centuries New Orleans has retained its character of a city with intoxicating charm that relishes in the forever, constant culture of its past with only one foot in the future. Those born and reared there, like David Guas, have a love affair with their city and their motivation is maintaining the integrity of its roots. At the ripe age of 14, the lure of its infectious and magical nightlife would get Guas sent off for a weekend to his Aunt Boo's in Abbeville, Louisiana for some good, clean fun. He would gain his righteousness back by learning and perfecting the nuances of making a roux. Subconsciously, that is how it all began for David Guas- punishment in the kitchen became his pleasure at the stove with all the lessons of traditions taught in a cast iron skillet and with a worn wooden spoon.

This charismatic chef, widely familiar from his frequent appearances on "The Today Show," "The Talk," cameos on the Food Network, as a co-celebrity judge on "Chopped" and "Chopped Junior," and brought a rugged charm to his host and co-judge appearance on "American Grilled," *Travel Channel's* 13-episode high-heat, high-stakes cooking competition program, Summer 2014. With no competition for attention, Guas – a two-time *Food & Wine* "People's Best New Chef: Mid-Atlantic" nominee – has garnered national praise in publications like *Southern Living*, *Garden & Gun*, *Saveur*, and *Bon Appétit* for showcasing the soul of the South in his sinfully delicious, Louisiana-style favorites and signature desserts at the neighborly Arlington, Virginia restaurant, established in 2010, **Bayou Bakery, Coffee Bar & Eatery**.

One of his Granny's kinfolk, Justin Wilson, the legendary Cajun cooking guru who was one of the first local personalities to host his own PBS show, recommended a few specialized classes with his friend Frank Sclafani, who runs a small culinary school in New Orleans. There, Guas absorbed the basic, classical preparations, as well as certain cutting-edge techniques needed to secure a job in a high-profile commercial kitchen. As an associate pastry chef at New Orleans' Windsor Court Hotel, he was invited to join a new enterprise in Washington, DC as executive pastry chef; Guas eventually became corporate pastry chef, developing dessert menus for six of Passion Food Hospitality's highly acclaimed subsequent restaurants over the ensuing decade.

After Katrina, Guas was inundated with memories of New Orleans, and his parent's home was erased by the Hurricane. It was then he knew he had to document dishes that were important to his heritage. Taking time off to consult and write a cookbook was a way to celebrate the restaurants, bakeries and candy corner shops that continue to thrive in the Crescent City or institutions that are long-gone. Guas' cookbook, *Dam Good Sweet: Desserts to Satisfy Your Sweet Tooth, New Orleans Style* [Taunton Press] is the result of a deeply personal, gorgeously photographed, generous gift of some of his best recipes. The book was a James Beard Award finalist in the Baking and Dessert Cookbook category and was named one of *Food & Wine's* "Best New Dessert Cookbooks." It was also finalist for the prestigious International Association of Culinary Professionals [IACP] Cookbook Award in the American Category. After Guas completed his travels visiting 13 historical and captivating cities featured on "American Grilled," it didn't take too long for Guas to put pen to paper and document his experiences on the road, observing regular folks at the grill. As fast as a flame ignites, his second cookbook was completed, *Grill Nation: 200 Surefire Recipes, Tips, and Techniques to Grill like a Pro*, released April 28, 2015 by the respected publishing group, Oxmoor House.

At any given time Chef Guas has more than 30 honey varietals on his kitchen counter and has a known "Sticky Station" at his eatery making him a honey connoisseur through and through. It all began for him as a child with the ubiquitous honey bear that sat on his mom's kitchen shelf. The amount of honey went down fast like sand moving through an hourglass, as his mother liked it in her tea to about much of everything. The love of honey became even more infectious with Guas when he met beekeepers from around the country, sourcing sweeteners for his desserts to savory dishes, and learning how those buzzy little worker bees make purest ingredient – honey. As a former spokesperson for the National Honey Board, Guas has experience exploring his passion for honey from desserts and baking to grilling and mixology, making him a honey of all trades.

Residing in northern Virginia, Guas is the proprietor of a New Orleans-style corner-gathering spot with a creative purpose – a culture to fiercely guard. The sporting months connect him with his youth of customary hunting and fishing sojourns that bring a natural rhythm to the flavors and products at his restaurant. The unexpected profusion of Cuban influences are a nice surprise in select dishes, but fundamentally organic with Guas' Cuban heritage from his émigré father who exposed him to the rituals of backyard grilling and family celebrations in Miami during his formative years. With an innate awareness of the growing periods for fruits, vegetables and herbs, Guas pays homage to the lifecycles and tastes of produce within its seasons. On his Sunday rides through the Virginia countryside on his customized, Harley Davidson ["very subtle; the color of a Japanese eggplant,"] Guas is always on the lookout for farm stands and other possible resources of regional ingredients.

Southern-born Guas has concluded that a restaurant's philosophy should be looked upon not only for its technique and cuisine, but also for its commitment to preserving hospitality as a tradition. "Don't forget where you came from!"

Notable Accomplishments: *For its ten-year anniversary celebration, Oprah Winfrey's O Magazine honored Guas, who presented a cake in her honor, and was featured as one of the Ten Best Pastry Chefs in the Country. Guas was a finalist for Food & Wine's People's Best New Chef in the Country and has appeared on Food Network's "Chopped" and the Cooking Channel's "Unique Sweets." Food & Wine also named Bayou Bakery's Muff-a-Lotta one of the "Top 20 Sandwiches" in the U.S., and later showcased the chef and his father in an eight-page feature detailing their travels to Cuba. Bayou Bakery was ranked as one of the Top Three Bakeries by Washingtonian readers, and was celebrated for producing one of the Top Three King Cakes in the Country by The Washington Post. Guas was named the Restaurant Association of Metropolitan Washington's Pastry Chef of the Year; Bon Appétit hailed him as one of eight "Dessert Stars" in the country; and Arlington Magazine featured Guas on the cover as "Best Chef of Arlington." In February 2019, Guas appeared on "CBS This Morning: The Dish" in a dedicated segment featuring his cookbook, Dam Good Sweet, and a selection of his favorite New Orleans-inspired recipes. The Arlington Chamber of Commerce honored Bayou Bakery with a 2019 Arlington Best Business Award for Retail Small Business of the Year. The Wild American Shrimp Processors Association named David Guas, 2019 Chef of the Year.*

David Guas formerly served on the board of the Southern Food and Beverage Museum in New Orleans; the board of Best Buddies of Virginia; as a spokesperson for the National Honey Board; and on the advisory council of the Atlanta Food & Wine Festival. Guas cofounded Chefs Feeding Families with Real Food for Kids. In March 2020, Guas launched Chefs Feeding Families to connect with his community and lead a mission that provides healthy, free meals to students and families impacted by COVID-19. In 2021, Guas was selected to become a member of the Food Security Task Force, in partnership with Arlington County Department of Human Services. Created with the goal to provide recommendations, including short and long-term goals for an integrated food security system in Arlington county, the task force develops strategies that will work to close gaps, and ensure access to healthy, affordable, and appropriate food for all Arlingtonians to access. He has also been tapped by the U.S. State Department to participate in its Diplomatic Culinary Partnership Initiative, and is a member of the Southern Foodways Alliance, Slow Food USA, Share Our Strength, and Chefs for Equality.

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