



Cooking, Eating, and the Gulf Oil Spill: Chef David Burke

Eighth in a series of posts on the impact of the Gulf Oil Spill from chefs and food writers around the co

By Team Planet Green | Sat Aug 28, 2010

As part of our coverage of [Blue August](#), Planet Green is interviewing chefs around the country to get their takes on the [Gulf Oil Spill](#) and how it might affect the future of the region's vibrant food culture. This is the fifth interview in the series; read the [whole series](#) for more from chefs like [Mario Batali](#) and food thinkers like [Ruth Reichl](#).

Blurring the lines between chef, artist, entrepreneur and inventor, David Burke stands as one of the leading pioneers in American cooking today. His fascination with ingredients and the art of the meal has fueled a career marked by creativity, critical acclaim and the introduction of revolutionary products and cooking techniques.

Burke trained at the Culinary Institute of America, and apprenticed in France with chefs Pierre Troisgros, Georges Blanc and Gaston Lenôtre, among others. He's opened several restaurants, such as [Park Avenue Café](#) and [Fishtail by David Burke](#) in New York City, and [Primehouse](#) in The James Chicago Hotel. Along the way, he's written [Cooking with David Burke](#) and [David Burke's New American Classics](#) and invented something called Pastrami Salmon™. He took time away from writing menus (and inventing new flavors of his ready-to-serve cocktail lollipops) to chat about his thoughts on the Gulf oil spill.

Planet Green: The Gulf region has such a rich and diverse food culture and history, and, as a chef, you're obviously very close to that every day when you go to work. How has the spill affected you? Has it changed the way you think about food? Or the connection between food and the environment?

David Burke: The devastation happening in the gulf is due to oil company errors. The end result should be that big businesses realize the importance of our oceans and the need to keep them clean and safe. This may change some people's eating habits, but not mine. I will continue to support the local Gulf Region and the products grown there.

PG: There's a lot of concern that seafood from the Gulf will take years, or maybe decades, to recover. What do you tell people who are concerned that Gulf seafood classics like oysters, shrimp, and catfish might be off the menu for a long time?

DB: After the spill has been cleaned, the fish stocks, oyster and mussel beds should be given time to flourish before any harvesting is done. As long as the food industry gives the region a chance to recover, I believe we will be eating gulf shrimp and oysters before we know it.

PG: What do you think the future of seafood from this region will be?

DB: The public will listen to the industry. We need to help restore people's confidence in the Gulf and their products.



Chef David Burke has been around restaurants long enough to know their role in promoting the best of the remaining Gulf seafood.

Credit: Lou Manna