



Effortless Elegance

An Interview with
John Meadow, President, LDV Hospitality



Scarpetta's newest restaurant "Sette" at the Bulgari Hotel London (left); Nolita Social in London (above)

EDITORS' NOTE Focused on concept and business development, John Meadow drives the creative process for LDV, envisioning and creating new concepts as well as forging business partnerships with hoteliers, developers, and celebrated chefs. Meadow began his career in the hospitality industry immediately after graduating from Cornell University's School of Hotel Administration, serving as manager at The Plaza Hotel's Oak Room. In 2008, he sought to create something of his own and opened Scarpetta to critical acclaim in New York City's then-emerging Meatpacking District. With Scarpetta's success, he went on to launch LDV Hospitality, which now consists of 27 food and beverage concepts throughout the country. Meadow's vision and philosophy for LDV is to take inspiration from iconic, classic moments of old-world hospitality cultures and adapt them to today's modern social life. Today, Meadow remains active in the alumni network at Cornell University, having served as the school's official Entrepreneur-in-Residence, as well as hosting and participating in a variety of classes, panels and events for the school throughout the year. Additionally, he is an active member of the NYC Food Service Industry Partnership Advisory Council. In 2016, he received the "Next Generation" Award from the New York City Hospitality Alliance.



John Meadow

Will you discuss LDV Hospitality's entrance into London and where you see additional growth opportunities internationally?

Across every segment, from sneakers to music, from restaurants to hotels, globalization is obviously a very real thing. We've never been more interconnected. I think that every different category of brand in today's universe becomes elevated into kind of a lifestyle brand. If you look at the restaurant space, the Zuma's and Cipriani's of the world have taken the international route and provide a very consistent experience.

There is a like-minded clientele in places that seem, on the surface, so disparate. In Istanbul, New York, Miami, London and Dubai, everyone goes to Zuma and while 20 years ago you would never believe that to be the case for this lifestyle brand, it is very much so now.

We firmly believe and are excited that Scarpetta can participate in that international lifestyle realm. It's something we're very eager to do and, frankly, what better market than London to launch our first international restaurant. I'm very confident and eager to go from London to Dubai and Tokyo and build Scarpetta to be the international lifestyle restaurant brand that it deserves to be.

Will there be common characteristics in each Scarpetta or will the restaurants be customized for the local market?

The core DNA always remains the same – the ethos of Scarpetta, this effortless elegance and taking simple quality seasonal ingredients and amplifying their qualities, will always remain the same. While there are many differences between New York, Miami, Philadelphia and the other domestic Scarpettas, they all maintain the same spirit, core ethos and brand DNA.

Whenever we adapt for a local market, we only minimally modify the food component; the food needs to remain very consistent. Of course, every market has different, wonderful local produce that you can engage with so that allows for the food adaptation.

Certainly, the aesthetic and the design of the spaces are different, but the core energy and feeling has to be consistent. For example, London, as compared to New York, is more refined and, therefore, the design aesthetic is slightly elevated from the kind of gritty, high/low balance that we have in our New York flagship.

I think there is a fine line between staying true to the brand, but also adapting for a local market and the best way to stay true is with the people. The reality is that at every Scarpetta and LDV restaurant we have the right authentic locals working in our restaurants and exemplifying that kind of grassroots, local team that really personify a city – this is the only way to truly become a part of that community.

Is Scarpetta the brand that offers the greatest opportunity for growth or do American Cut and some of the other brands offer growth opportunities as well?

I actually think that American Cut and Dolce are far more scalable than Scarpetta. I think Dolce could go in every major city in this country that wants authentic Italian food that is simple yet high quality for a great value. I think American Cut isn't as scalable as Dolce, but the idea of an elevated new American steak restaurant will certainly find a tremendous audience, both domestically and globally.

Scarpetta is our most specific and unique concept. I would say it's not an Italian restaurant, and it's not an American restaurant. It is a kind of modern, *nouvelle*, international approach to Italian cuisine. Therefore, it's quite unique, and that uniqueness makes it less scalable than some of the others.

As LDV has grown, is it more difficult to remain involved in all aspects of the business?

I am all in on conceptualization, design, construction, uniforms, and music – all the programmatic elements that create a restaurant, whether it's in London, New York, or Miami. No matter where we end up, I will always be involved in that aspect.

The challenge is building a team that understands the LDV culture and spreads the gospel, so to speak. We just spent the last month in our corporate office here in New York with six of our new London team members, and we went to Scarpetta every night, getting a true crash course in becoming a part of our culture.

Eight of our corporate team will go to London when we open and spend anywhere from one month to a year there. It is exciting bringing new people into our fold and having the opportunity to really connect with them and have them become a part of our culture. I don't intend to walk the floor of the London dining room five nights a week; it's not realistic. However, I will go all in during the development stage and really invest in defining the culture. To be honest, all the visits to London are quite fun for me. ●

COMPANY BRIEF LDV Hospitality (ldvhospitality.com) is a boutique hospitality group that creates authentic and unique restaurant and cocktail bar experiences. Inspired by La Dolce Vita (*The Good Life*), the group was founded by John Meadow in 2008. The LDV portfolio spans across nine cities throughout the United States with its home in New York City, as well as one city across the pond, making its first international debut in London. Other locations include The Hamptons, Miami and Las Vegas. In addition to its signature brands, LDV develops tailor-made concepts for its hotel partners, working with iconic hotels such as The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas, The Fontainebleau of Miami, Gurney's Resorts and The James New York - NoMad. In summer 2019, LDV will open its first international restaurant and cocktail lounge in partnership with Bulgari Hotel London.