



## Strategic Growth

An Interview with John Meadow,  
Co-Founder and Principal, LDV Hospitality



American Cut Midtown (left); Scarpetta Beach (above)

**EDITORS' NOTE** John Meadow's LDV Hospitality is a New York City-based independent restaurant group that owns and operates its own restaurant brands, manages and develops hotel food and beverage operations, and partners with chefs and entrepreneurs to facilitate the development of new brands. After graduating from Cornell University School of Hotel Administration in 2002, Meadow's first job was as Food & Beverage Manager at the Plaza Hotel. After a year in that position, he partnered with entrepreneur



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and restaurateur Curt Huegel to open Local West in Midtown Manhattan. Stemming from the success of this first spot, Meadow opened Gin Lane in 2006, which would become Scarpetta two years later when he teamed up with celebrity chef Scott Conant. LDV Hospitality would go on to open multiple other Scarpetta locations in Miami at the Fontainebleau Hotel, in Toronto within the Thompson Hotel, in Los Angeles within the Montage Beverly Hills Hotel, and in Las Vegas at The Cosmopolitan. Additionally, LDV opened wine bar D.O.C.G. in 2010. In 2009, Meadow opened Lugo Caffè. The next year, they opened Lucy's Cantina Royale in the same Madison Square Garden neighborhood. He then teamed with superstar chef Sam Hazen to relaunch the Michelin-starred Veritas. In January 2011, Meadow and Huegel merged all of their restaurants and subsidiaries to form one partnership as LDV Hospitality ([ldvhospitality.com](http://ldvhospitality.com)).

Since the official formation of LDV in 2011, the company opened three new restaurant properties at Revel Resort in Atlantic City in the Spring of 2012: American Cut with Iron Chef Marc Forgione, Azure with chef Alain Allegretti, and the first expansion of Lugo, opening Lugo Italian. Also in 2012, LDV Hospitality partnered with nightlife veteran Amy Sacco and launched the No. 8 brand in New York's Meatpacking District. In January 2013, LDV opened three food and beverage properties in the Gale South Beach including Dolce Italian, Rec Room, and The Regent Cocktail Club. Soon after, in February 2013, LDV Hospitality opened Corso Coffee, an Italian style coffee bar with a New York ambiance in the Theater District of Manhattan. Along with the creation of Corso came the launch of LDV Imports, a wholesaler of Corso Coffee and the Italian imported Anéri Tricaffè espresso.

LDV Hospitality opened the flagship location of American Cut in the heart of Tribeca in September 2013. At the beginning of 2014, LDV reopened the Diamond Horseshoe at the Paramount Hotel in New York City.

**Will you talk about some of the new developments within LDV and where you anticipate further growth?**

We recently opened Scarpetta at the Rittenhouse Hotel in Philadelphia with Hersha Hospitality, as well as American Cut in Buckhead, Atlanta. Those are two of our 10 openings in recent years. We have gone through a hyper-aggressive two-year growth spurt.

We also have a few deals lined up for the fourth quarter of next year, but we're not opening anything for a year.

This provides a great opportunity to reflect on our existing businesses and how we want to go forward. Our historical book has largely been opportunistic, in that someone calls us and asks us to open a restaurant and we either do it or not. After having opened such a variety of deal types and locations, I'm finally ready to acknowledge our core skill sets and core brands, and shift towards a more strategic approach for the future. I intend to do another 10 openings over the next few years, but more strategic rather than reactive and opportunistic.

This is an important time because we're on the precipice of such an extraordinary transition in this industry between the cost of construction, rent, and the labor expenses looming on the horizon.

**Will growth come from within those existing brands?**

Our primary goal is to grow our core brands of Scarpetta, American Cut, Dolce Italian, and Corso Coffee. Those four will grow vis-à-vis leasehold positions.

In terms of developing new concepts, we're always eager to stay fresh but, realistically, we have the opportunity to do a lot of new things. This entails effectively creating one-off tailor-made concepts for our hotel clients and partners, and therefore new concepts in hotels with tried-and-true proven brands. This could either be independent or in hotels, but leasehold as opposed to the hotel food services offering.

**What does American Cut stand for? It doesn't seem like a typical steakhouse experience.**

I grew up going to Peter Luger's, which is the quintessential steakhouse unlike American Cut, which is a modern American steak restaurant. The traditional steakhouse is a saturated marketplace and the competition, in some cases, has been around north of 100 years.

The idea of something modern that has a concentration on steak demonstrates a difference. The overall dining experience with us is completely different.

**How do you differentiate with Scarpetta in the high-end Italian food space?**

There is such an array of Italian food restaurants, but Scarpetta is an American version of modern Italian. It's a quintessentially New York restaurant with a New York feel that happens to serve high-end, modern Italian food. It's our most modern brand, even though it's our oldest.

Scarpetta is rooted in the Italian dinner party experience but is very modern, urbane, sophisticated, chic and, ultimately, it's a Downtown New York restaurant.

**How is that differentiated from Dolce Italian?**

Dolce is a celebration of an authentic Italian experience. We have an Italian chef and the feeling celebrates Italy's grand café culture. It's all of the Italian staples presented in a clean fashion but rooted in the classics.

**With such a strong following in New York, is it important to also have a Dolce Italian within New York City at some point?**

The three things I have to do are Scarpetta in London, American Cut in Las Vegas, and Dolce in New York City. Those three restaurants are the most pressing for us to sign up.

We're heading to Dubai next year and we're very excited about that and the rest of the international market as well.

**Will you talk about how Corso Coffee ties in?**

LDV is about charming everyday experiences, and nothing speaks to that more than Corso. It's in line with offering the Dolce Vita aesthetic with a \$2 cup of coffee in a two-minute transaction. That is the quintessential everyday indulgence in the charming good life, which we stand for. We're eager to grow it but we are also primarily focused on our full-service restaurants.

**Has retaining your people been difficult when there is generally a lot of turnover in this industry?**

As we've grown our business, we have attracted and retained solid people who are choosing this for a career. When we stick to our core, we get the professionals who want stability, and they appreciate our passion, which makes it easier. ●