

## Zack Bruell Bio

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In the past decade Chef Zack Bruell has emerged as Cleveland's most prolific restaurateur – this, amid a local groundswell of nationally lauded chefs. Now, with more than a dozen celebrated eateries to his name, Zack is leading a culinary momentum that has placed Cleveland's food scene on a national stage.

His trademark style of layering powerful, yet distinctive flavors defines everything he does – from French to Asian and Italian to seafood. He reimagines classic cuisine through a contemporary lens and elevates ingredients to their purest form. No single menu item is repeated among his 10 highly acclaimed restaurants. It's a testament to the depth and creativity that transcends any single success.

Zack's 40-year journey began out west in the 1970s, under visionary chef Michael McCarty. Zack was among a team of classically trained, sous-chef protégés who fearlessly deconstructed traditional cooking and made *Michael's Santa Monica* an American institution. Together, they drove an avant-garde subculture that became known worldwide as *California Cuisine*.

As the movement exploded on the West Coast, Zack set out to make his own mark. He traveled back to his native Cleveland, and with the brash new concept in tow, he opened the iconic Z Contemporary Cuisine in Shaker Heights, Ohio.

Set within original Bauhaus architecture in stark white simplicity, the space reflected the essence of food. The approach challenged the Midwest mindset of fine dining. It was a seminal moment in the industry's move away from heavy cream sauces and dark wood paneling.

By 2004, Zack took a chance on a remote corner spot in the Tremont neighborhood of Cleveland. When he opened *Parallax*, critics took notice of a breakthrough Franco-Asian style they had never known, and the restaurant became a foodie favorite.

The buzz eclipsed nearby competition, as fans flooded the restaurant. Among his followers were executives from the Cleveland Clinic. They asked Zack to blowout the antiquated country-club interior of the InterContinental Hotel restaurant, *Classics*, and start from scratch.

With a major investment from the Clinic, Zack created *Table 45* – a modern construct of flavors from around the globe. The space was set in a surreal blend of wood, steel and whitespace, enfolded in translucent shades of glass and light. It was his greatest work to date.

For Zack, simplicity feeds sophistication. Architecture speaks to the food in an unequivocal statement of less is more. Critics and diners responded, and Zack was firmly ensconced as the region's culinary leader.

Across Northeast Ohio, a restaurant resurgence began to take shape. Zack led the way with sophisticated environments that equally welcomed a suit and tie to jeans and a tee shirt. The formula caught fire and eight new Bruell locations followed – all within the city limits of Cleveland.

To this day, Zack's achievements are unrivaled in the region. His brand has attracted accolades from *Esquire*, *Food and Wine* and *The Wall Street Journal*. He launched a catering division, Zack Bruell Events, and a line of retail products, including coffee, vinegars, olive oils and sauces.

Throughout his career, Zack has avoided the trappings of modern celebrity. His spirit never left that group of renegade chefs in California, who thrived on defying tradition. To this day Zack is most comfortable in the kitchen, tinkering with ingredients and searching for new ways to break the rules.