DAVID CHANG

THE TEMPESTUOUS CHEF BEHIND NEW YORK CITY'S MOMOFUKU RESTAURANTS IS TRYING TO RELAX MORE. BUT HE'S NOT LETTING THAT GET IN THE WAY OF BUILDING HIS GLOBAL EMPIRE.

Q: I'VE HEARD YOU'RE PRETTY AMBIVALENT ABOUT THE IDEA OF CELEBRITY CHEFS—IS THAT TRUE?
A: Everyone tries to compare cooks to rock stars. I see more comparisons to the fashion world. In fashion, you have one to two to three designers who actually do something new. Everyone else just fucking regurgitates and copies and steals and takes esoteric ideas from 20 or 30 years ago.

Q: IN THE PAST, YOU'VE PUSHED YOURSELF SO HARD THAT YOU'VE MADE YOURSELF ILL. ARE YOU STILL A WORKAHOLIC?
A: I think it's different for New York chefs, because you have to do two, three, four turns of your entire restaurant to stay in business. That's just for dinner. I really feel that every time you serve a customer, finish a ticket, a bit of your fucking soul goes with it.

Q: SO HOW DO YOU COMBAT THAT?
A: About 2009, I realized I needed to make some changes. I would wake up angry, go to bed angry. I was so full of fucking hate and rage—for six years straight. I was like, "If I keeled over and died at 32 because I was yelling at a fucking kid who wasn't condensing food properly . . . that is the *dumbest* way to go out."

Q: PEOPLE HAVE BEEN CLAMORING FOR YOU TO OPEN IN L.A. FOR YEARS. IT SEEMS LIKE YOU'D HAVE A LOT OF FUN WITH THE PRODUCE OUT THERE.
A: Absolutely! I think the best restaurants in America should be in California. It's the land of fucking everything . . . but everywhere you go, everyone wants rustic Italian shit. And everyone's opening up these fucking farm-to-table bullshit restaurants. How else are you supposed to cook? You're *supposed* to get the best ingredients possible. Do you want a pat on the back?

Q: YOU'RE EXPANDING TO SYDNEY THIS FALL. HOW DID YOU CHOOSE THAT CITY FOR YOUR FIRST RESTAURANT OUTSIDE OF NEW YORK?
A: I was there last year and just fell in love with Australia—holy shit, the produce, the proteins, the fish. And we're going to open Momofuku Toronto in 2012. I will always love New York. But why wouldn't I want to explore the amazing bounty of Toronto?

Q: ANY PLANS FOR A LINE OF DAVID CHANG FROZEN PORK BUNS?
A: That arc's going to happen. It would be nice to have money in the bank. I *don't*. I leverage everything. All my shit's on the line.

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BY JESSE ASHLOCK

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