

# LEXUS CULINARY MASTERS WELCOMES SHOTA NAKAJIMA

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**PLANO, Texas (Jan. 17, 2024)** – Lexus is proud to welcome acclaimed chef, restaurateur, and television personality Shota Nakajima to its esteemed team of Lexus Culinary Masters. In his newly appointed role, Nakajima will serve as an ambassador to the brand, crafting amazing experiences and amplifying Lexus core values of innovation, omotenashi, and master craftsmanship.

Trained under Michelin Star-rated Chef Yasuhiko Sakamoto in Osaka, Japan at the age of 18, Chef Nakajima set his sights on bringing his mentor’s approach to hospitality and Japanese cuisine back to his hometown of Seattle, WA.

Combining the formidable experience with his own perspective and imaginative applications, his dream was realized at age 25 with the opening of his restaurant, Adana, in Capital Hill. By early 2020, Nakajima opened Taku featuring karaage, Japanese fried chicken, and then Kobo Pizza in 2022 serving rectangular pies inspired by Detroit-style pizzas with Japanese influence.

“Serving up modern dishes that masterfully encapsulate the traditional flavors of our Japanese heritage, Chef Nakajima is an exceptional addition to the Lexus family,” said Kevin Higgins, Lexus general manager of marketing. “We are thrilled to bring his passion for tradition and culinary innovation to our entire community and look forward to his future contributions to the Culinary Masters program.”

Chef Nakajima is a three-time James Beard Award semi-finalist, recipient of *Eater*’s ‘Young Guns’ award, and recognized as a *Zagat* ‘30 Under 30’ chef, among other accolades. He competed on Season 18 of Bravo’s *Top Chef*, placing as a top three finalist, and has made appearances on the Food Network’s *Iron Chef Gauntlet*, *Beat Bobby Flay*, and *Tournament of Champions*.

“I’m honored to be recognized alongside a celebrated team of culinary visionaries,” said Chef Nakajima. “I look forward to deepening my relationship with the Lexus brand and building amazing experiences for its community.”

As a Lexus Culinary Master, Nakajima will partner with the brand on marketing initiatives and food and wine events. In September 2023, prior to his official induction to the team, Nakajima represented the brand at the Hamburger Hop event at renowned food festival Chicago Gourmet, taking home the People’s Choice and Judge’s Choice awards for his mouthwatering Osaka Burger.

The Lexus Culinary Masters team is currently comprised of some of the country’s most prestigious chefs, restaurateurs and culinary personalities. Nakajima joins James Beard Award-winning chefs Kwame Onwuachi, Michelle Bernstein, Stephanie Izard, Jon Shook, and Vinny Dotolo; Michelin star-awarded chefs Ludo Lefebvre and Carlo Mirarchi; celebrated sommelier Carlton McCoy; and the “father of Southern Cuisine” Dean Fearing in the distinction.