

**R**estaurants that want to succeed in Boston's increasingly crowded fine dining scene need more than just great food and a top-notch waitstaff. When it comes to attracting fickle foodies, the atmosphere counts.

That's where Stephen Martyak comes in. The North Carolina-raised designer, who launched studioTYAK in 2012, specializes in creating restaurant design elements that fuse form with function. "It's all about concept," says Martyak. "It's about making sure that the guest experiences that narrative in the space, with [for example] the food and the service model."

A graduate of Boston Architectural College as well as Savannah College of Art and Design, Martyak has earned a reputation for elevating a number of high-profile projects, such as Harvard Square's rock club/restaurant The Sinclair and chef Chris Coombs' upscale steak bistro, Boston Chops. Martyak has earned a slew of accolades over the years, including landing a spot on Zagat Boston's 30 Under 30 list in 2013. His work with Loretta's Last Call in Fenway was named one of the country's best-designed restaurants in 2015 by *Thrillist*, and he earned a nod from *Eater* in 2018 when Boston Chops' Downtown Crossing location was a nominee for design of the year.

Martyak believes there are several keys to crafting an award-winning restaurant, one of which is "to keep ego out of design" and focus on what fits for that particular project. Lighting is also critical for "[evoking] mood" in a space and shining a spotlight on the dishes. "You want to be able to showcase the food in the best light possible," he says.

How each component functions for the staff is just as crucial as how beautiful it is, since a restaurant is as much a workspace as a guest's playground. The designer notes the glassware display in the center of the Downtown Boston Chops as a prime example. "We've got all of our glassware displayed on shelves in the very center of the restaurant," he says. "That's a service station, but a very beautiful one, and it kind of integrates itself seamlessly into the space."

Overall, Martyak describes himself as an "anti-trend designer" who utilizes simple yet gorgeous elements that stand the test of time. "My focus is on longevity," he says, "and to use materials in new ways."

# Delicious DESIGNS

Stephen Martyak shares the keys to creating gorgeous restaurants.

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