

FOOD AND BEVERAGE

Lexus adds ambassador to Culinary Masters program roster

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The 34-year-old will work with Lexus on marketing initiatives, representing the brand at various food and wine events. Image credit: Lexus

By LUXURY DAILY NEWS SERVICE

Toyota Corp.'s Lexus is partnering with Japanese-American chef Shota Nakajima.

The latest appointee to the Lexus Culinary Masters team, which crafts special experiences around the globe, will work with the brand on marketing initiatives and food and wine events. At 34 years old, the restaurateur and television personality has made a name for himself in his hometown of Seattle, becoming a three-time semifinalist for the James Beard Rising Star Chef of the Year award, among other accomplishments.

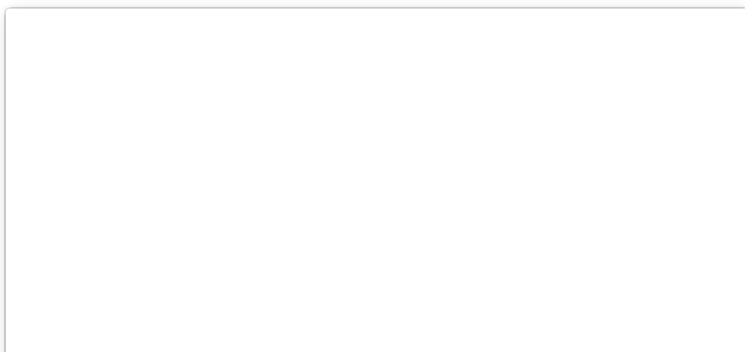
"Serving up modern dishes that masterfully encapsulate the traditional flavors of our Japanese heritage, Chef Nakajima is an exceptional addition to the Lexus family," said Kevin Higgins, general manager of marketing at Lexus, in a statement.

"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."

Order up

Mr. Nakajima previously represented Lexus in a nonofficial capacity at food festival Chicago Gourmet's Hamburger Hop activation in September 2023.

Beginning his career studying under Japanese Michelin-star chef Yasuhiko Sakamoto at 18, Mr. Nakajima is now a high-profile cook in his own right. The entrepreneur has opened several restaurants, making appearances on American television shows such as *Top Chef*, *Iron Chef Gauntlet* and *Beat Bobby Flay*.



[View this post on Instagram](#)

A post shared by Lexus (@lexususa)

Now, Mr. Nakajima puts on the apron as a Culinary Master, where he will collaborate with the company as a member of its growing roster.

"I'm honored to be recognized alongside a celebrated team of culinary visionaries," said Mr. Nakajima, in a statement.

"I look forward to deepening my relationship with the Lexus brand and building amazing experiences for its community."

Mr. Nakajima joins fellow professionals in receiving the new title, including 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.

French fashion house Dior recently added another restaurant by French Michelin-star chef Anne-Sophie Pic to its portfolio ([see story](#)).

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