



BY EILEEN MELLON



[From left]  
Braised daikon  
with togarashi  
and shrimp; Young  
Mother chef and  
founder Daniel  
Harthausen



INSIDER

## Early Enlightenment

A pop-up from a 26-year-old chef has become one of Richmond's hottest dining tickets

**A** year into his pop-up, Young Mother, Daniel Harthausen has a waitlist of over 100 people, and that's not including their dinner guests.

"The last person I put on the reservation list had been waiting for 10 months," says the 26-year-old chef.

Once a month on a Tuesday, when Adarra is closed to the public, Harthausen, the restaurant's bar manager, takes over the Jackson Ward kitchen, serving an a la carte menu with dishes such as chawanmushi, a silky egg custard, or togarashi and shrimp with mu radish, a Korean equivalent to a daikon. Via Instagram, he announces

pop-up dates, provides peeks of the menu and takes reservations for the intimate, 35-seat dinners.

"I think after the third or fourth one, it really hit the ground running," Harthausen says.

Since his inaugural event in April of last year, Young Mother has become one of the most sought-after reservations in the city. What started out as an opportunity to share a backlog of recipes rooted in Harthausen's diverse upbringing has transformed organically, with the narrative of its multicultural origin unfolding after each

event, while simultaneously inciting chatter among intrigued diners.

"I'm trying to create an experience as specifically a pop-up," says Harthausen. "I didn't want to do a restaurant in this restaurant. I wanted it to be this other thing people can get excited about."

Harthausen's mother had him when she was 19, and the name of his pop-up is loosely based on her. His father was in the military, which meant his family moved often, and many of the menu items are a nostalgic nod to the Asian communities that helped raise him. Drawing on influences from Japan and Korea, Young Mother encourages and pushes diners to recognize the commonalities between the two cuisines.

"I wanted to do something between Japanese and Korean cultures, and that was always the mission, but a big part of that is doing it in a way that



Onigiri dish from Young Mother

# CRULLER TECHNOLOGIES, INC.

Providing IT consulting services to small and mid-size businesses since 1989. Specializing in integrating Macs, PCs, and mobile devices into your business. Driving business success and growth through innovative technology solutions.

Call us today at 804-672-7272 for an on-site consultation for your home or business.



Microsoft  
Partner Network



Consultants  
Network

[www.crullertech.com](http://www.crullertech.com)

doesn't seem kitschy but feels organic," he says. "I'm trying to explore similarities between the two countries that exist because of history, not just because of culture, and having that same dynamic showcased through the food."

The menu for Young Mother changes, but not frequently. Instead, the dishes, such as dumplings, evolve over time. If ordered six months ago, chances are they've done a little growing up since, with each iteration standing on its own. The next one up: Korean dumpling soup.

"People know wonton soup, but there [are] all these different cultures that have their own version of that, so it's kind of cool to represent that," Harthausen says.

Young, yet wise about his culinary path, Harthausen has harnessed the freedom that many chefs spend the first part of their career seeking — plating dishes that break down barriers, open discussion and are strikingly different from those being served around the region. Pushing a new class of chefs, he's not worried about investors or securing a brick-and-mortar; instead he's focused on thoughtfully and purposefully seeking to carve out a unique space in the food and drink community.

"I'm still learning how I want to build out my repertoire and identity as a chef," says Harthausen, whose resume includes stints at Common House, Alchemy Coffee and the now-shuttered pop-up-turned-restaurant Yaki.

But not having it figured out while having the desire to do so is what has sparked the magic of Young Mother. In a time when people are searching for a diverse, elevated experience, the pop-up reassures Harthausen of his vision.

"It's different with a purpose," Harthausen says. "When I think of Richmond, this third-generation swing, what does it look like for the city, and what possibilities are there?"

"Diners in Richmond have places to them that are comfortable, and if we can create more places where people can tap into something different, we should." ■

## DocuLex

Electronic Files Work Just  
Like Paper Files... Only Better!

Effective Document Management...  
DocuLex has made things faster,  
easier and truly affordable.

The Archive Studio Content Management Solution by DocuLex is powerful and easy-to-use.

Archive Studio turns MFPs and scanners into the center of productivity for any business, and enables:

- Secure, instant document access from anywhere
- Collaboration
- Email archiving and compliance
- Customized workflow and records retention

Call Or E-mail Today For A No-Obligation Demonstration In Your Office  
Dennis Weiner, Southern Technology

**804-752-6154**

[www.southern technology.us](http://www.southern technology.us) | [dweiner@southern technology.us](mailto:dweiner@southern technology.us)

## PROFILE

# LOVE AND PRIDE

Rustic and rooted in history, Haitian cuisine comes to life through Lakay Zaz

By Eileen Mellon

**W**hen Sthara Normil held her first pop-up in Richmond in early May, it sold out within hours. Tickets for salted fish patties, whole red snapper and griyo, a citrus-marinated pork that is slow-cooked, flash-fried and served with fried plantains, filled the kitchen window, with some diners peeking in on the chef to converse with her in Haitian-Creole.

Despite Normil having only a newly established catering business and a humble following on Instagram and Facebook, word traveled, and so did people, with her inaugural event drawing Haitian and Caribbean natives who now live in Arlington, Virginia Beach and Norfolk.

"I didn't know there was so much Hai-

tian in Richmond," says Normil, 28. "It was mind-blowing."

The cuisine of Haiti is based off of what is accessible and readily available on the island — rice, fresh fish, beans, plantains and yams. The food is bold and spice-heavy, a culinary cauldron of colonization, ingredients and cooking styles ranging from African and French to Spanish and Arab.

"As far as what really influences it — everything, we use whatever we have," Normil says. "The food has so much flavor — there's the spice, the love and the pride of Haitian people."

Born in Haiti's capital city of Port-au-

Sthara Normil, owner of Lakay Zaz



Prince, Normil lived on the gulf island until she was 16.

According to the U.S. Census, America is home to the largest Haitian migrant population in the world, with over a million residents. And

while locally there has not been much exposure of the island-inspired cuisine, Normil hopes to change that.

Like many stories, this one is rooted in a matriarch, Normil's mother, Ritza Normil. A caterer in Haiti and a natural entertainer, her mom's home was where friends and neighbors flocked to enjoy celebrations, hold family gatherings and feast.

"When we ask people, 'Hey, what are we doing for the holiday?' [They say], 'I'm going to lakay Zaz,'" Normil explains. "That means house of Zaz. My mom's name is Ritza, and her nickname is Zaz. 'Lakay' means house of."

While her mother remains in Haiti, Normil immigrated to Brooklyn in 2012, two years after the devastating earthquake on the island that she describes as the "worst day" of her life. She lived with family and finished high school in Manhattan before relocating to Richmond.

Despite having a dream of attending Le Cordon Bleu cooking school, Normil studied IT. Post-college, she worked as a host and server at restaurants that included O'Charley's, Golden Corral and The Boathouse, the latter of which found

Griyo — citrus-marinated pork that's flash-fried





Patrons at the Lakay Zaz pop-up in May

her suggesting dinner specials to the chef on a semiregular basis. Although she held front-of-house positions, cooking remained Normil's passion, and last year she launched a small catering business, selling mostly Haitian fish patties through Lakay Zaz.

Flaky yet chewy, the square-shaped savory treats are stuffed with fish that's salted to help preserve them and keep them fresh. Eaten for breakfast, lunch and dinner, the patties are requested by Normil's customers by the dozen.

"That's a tradition from Africa that we have on the island," Normil says. "We love our salted fish, especially in the morning with boiled green plantains, avocado and yam."

At the beginning of the year, Normil began to toy with the idea of a pop-up, sharing her vision with a former Golden Corral co-worker Tiara Black, who took over ownership of Forest Hill's Eat 66 in February. A friend and a fan of Normil's food, Black invited her to operate pop-ups

from the breakfast-heavy eatery when it was closed.

Twice a month, Normil plans to transport diners to her homeland through Lakay Zaz. Visitors can expect to be greeted with striking tastes, intoxicating smells and the hip-swaying sounds of kompa, traditional Haitian music, while perhaps sipping a little

too easily on Rhum Barbancourt, a sugar cane spirit from the island that Normil prepares with mango, pineapple and lime juices, as well as a dash of simple syrup.

"The main thing besides the restaurant pop-up is to bring Haitian culture to Virginia, the food, the music, the goodies, and everything to Virginia, because we don't have it, and there is a community here in Richmond," Normil says.

At the core of all Haitian cuisine is epis, a distinct spice blend that's as ubiquitous as salt and pepper. A combination of garlic, scallion, parsley, onion, thyme, cloves and peppers, it is the piquant plinth that defines the Creole- and Caribbean-tinged food. Fish. Meat. Rice. Soup. It is found everywhere, and in everything.

"It is the base of any Haitian dish," Normil says. "The difference between Haitian food and the other Caribbean food is the spice we use, epis."

A dish deeply rooted in Haiti's iden-

“

**As far as what really influences [Lakay Zaz] — everything, we use whatever we have. The food has so much flavor — there's the spice, the love and the pride of Haitian people."**

—Sthara Normil

tity and found on the menu at Lakay Zaz is a black rice made with mushrooms from northern Haiti called djon djon. A foraged delicacy, the coveted fungi add a rich, earthy depth of flavor, and they are comparable to morels — regionally found, and with a short-lived, yet prominent presence.

The menu also features whole red snapper; phyllo shells stuffed with chik-tay moru, a salted codfish in a spicy vinaigrette; and crispy akra, fritters made from the malanga root vegetable. Many of the dishes at Lakay Zaz are served with fried plantains and pikliz, a white-vinegar and lime-spiked condiment of carrots, cabbage, bell peppers and scotch bonnets.

While this is the beginning of Normil's pop-up journey, she says the excitement surrounding it so far has left her with a warm feeling, one that she wants to continue to experience and share.

"We share our food with our neighbors, always," says Normil of Haitian culture. "One thing I like when I'm in Haiti is you slow down, take a breath and enjoy life — I want people to do the same with my food." **R**



Pikliz, fried plantains and djon djon rice



BY EILEEN MELLON

INSIDER

# 'Solidarity, Not Charity'

A growing local grassroots organization plans to introduce a free community grocery store

**F**ueled by community members' participation, in the three years since its inception, Mutual Aid Distribution Richmond has been a showcase of the power that lies within people.

After establishing itself as a vital resource, providing groceries and supplies to those in need, the network of community members and organizations is working to open a brick-and-mortar grocery store that will provide access to free food.

"Folks can give what they can and take what they need — all in the spirit of solidarity, not charity," MAD RVA volunteer Colleen Howarth says.

Language is important at MAD RVA, and "solidarity" is a word used often. A core value adopted by the nonprofit is the idea of "power with, not over," and that the organization is a circle of community, rather than a linear hierarchy.

Originally founded by neighbors in response to freezing temperatures that were affecting the local homeless community, the grassroots nonprofit has experienced an awe-inspiring evolution.

During the pandemic, MAD RVA, which now has 35 to 40 active volunteers, encountered increased need among those seeking its resources, in addition to an outpouring of support in the form of donations.

Holding in-person and online supply drives, members collected and redistributed food, personal protective equipment, cleaning supplies, hygiene items and money, using the Summit Street



Left: A group of volunteers from MAD RVA; Below: Donations received by the mutual aid organization

“  
Folks can give what they can and take what they need — all in the spirit of solidarity, not charity.”

— Colleen Howarth, MAD RVA volunteer

location of Lamplighter Coffee Roasters for six months before relocating to a larger space of their own at 711 Hospital St. in September 2020.

"So many families in the Richmond area were struggling and resources were largely inaccessible to them — the need was high and continues to be," Howarth says. "Neighbors, friends and relatives showed up to support our work, and we were able to raise lots of funds and bring in more volunteers to help these families."

Over the summer, the group also held a pop-up store in Chimborazo Park hosted by the Virginia Prison Abolition



Collective that offered free clothes and kitchenware, along with announcing a call for air-conditioning units and fans.

"We have learned so much about how to engage in mutual aid practices here in Richmond, our own capacity as a collective and what we can do to be there for our neighbors," Howarth says.

The shift toward a free store model will help MAD RVA support more people,

## GET YOUR PAWS ON THE LATEST RESTAURANT NEWS, EVENTS, VIDEOS AND SNEAK PEEKS.

while offering its patrons more agency in ensuring their food security. Although the site of the future grocery store has yet to be determined, the organization has been focusing its search on North Side, the East End and South Side, areas that are more prone to food deserts and scarcity. For those who have grown accustomed to reaching MAD RVA via its now-shuttered Hospital Street space, delivery will remain an option once the store opens.

"MAD RVA is excited to transform and create this next iteration of our project, and to expand mutual aid even more to our neighbors and with each other," Howarth says. "A new building that has additional space and amenities also means more opportunities to collaborate with other groups in Richmond doing this work and to explore other ways to increase our reach."

The store is intended to be a more streamlined, accessible and permanent version of MAD RVA's current efforts, continuing to accept donations of goods and raising funds for inventory. The collective has set a goal of \$30,000 to be able to continue providing mutual aid in a new building that they plan to rent. Donations made at [richmondmutualaid.wixsite.com](http://richmondmutualaid.wixsite.com) will go directly toward supplies and outfitting the space. The group also plans to set up an ongoing fundraising structure to cover rent, utilities and other fees each month.

"We hope for the free store to be operational in early 2022 and are working hard to make it happen," Howarth says. "One of the main goals of the new building is also to just connect with folks on the importance of mutual aid and how it can be practiced in everyday life." ■



**SIGN UP FOR RICHMOND MAGAZINE'S WEEKLY E-NEWSLETTERS AT [RICHMONDMAG.COM/NEWSLETTERS](http://RICHMONDMAG.COM/NEWSLETTERS).**

## WEDDINGS & CELEBRATIONS

*As Big As Our Mountain!*



Surrounded by exquisite mountain vistas, Wintergreen Resort provides a magical setting for a memorable wedding experience.

Wintergreen's all-inclusive wedding packages can accommodate the most intimate gatherings to extravagant affairs including pre- and post-wedding events, ceremony, reception, lodging and more. Plus, your guests can make a complete vacation with 45-holes of golf, world-renowned tennis, a full-service spa, shopping, delectable dining, indoor and outdoor pools, an adventure center, and the list goes on.

Our on-site professional wedding coordinator is ready to help you plan your special day so you can shout 'I Do' from the mountaintop surrounded by your friends and family!



**Wintergreen** Resort

888.807.6980  
[wintergreenresort.com](http://wintergreenresort.com)