

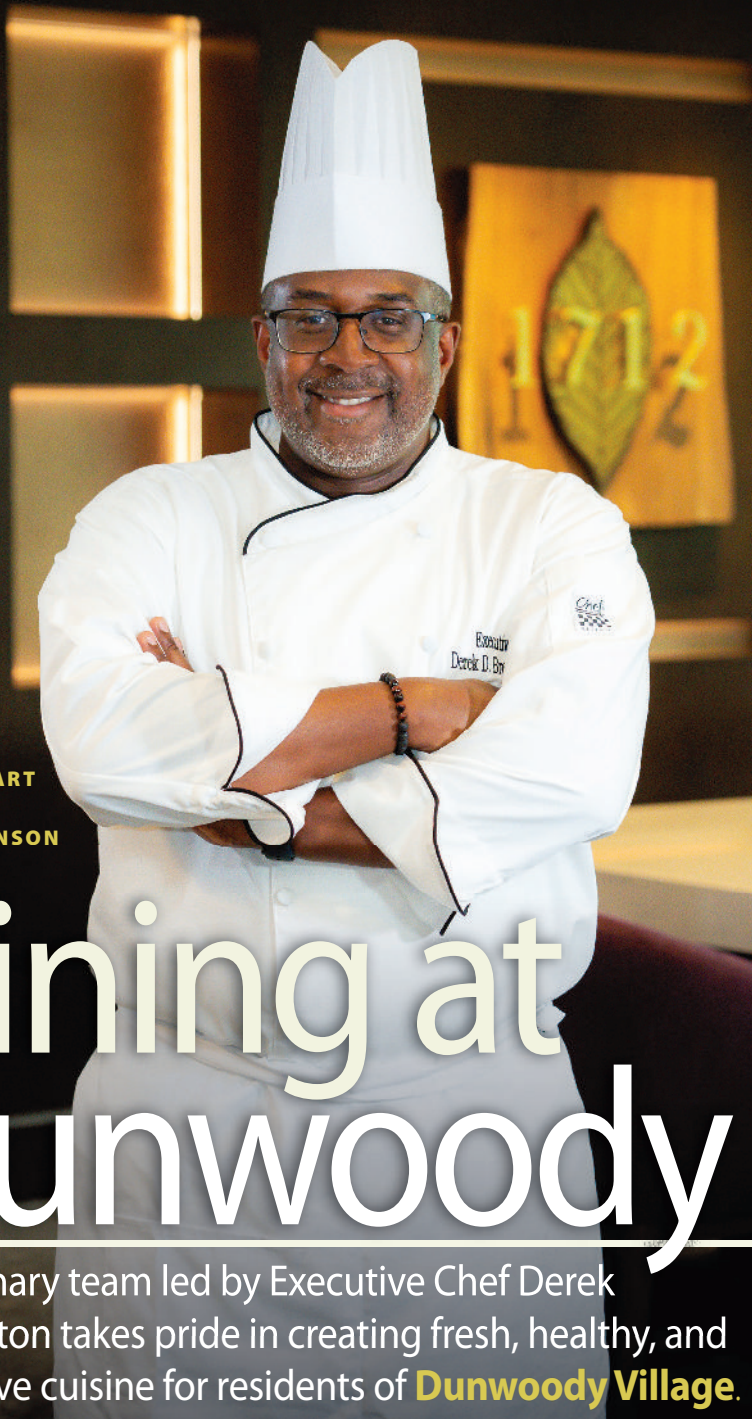
# suburban life

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The culinary team led by **Executive Chef Derek Brewington** takes pride in creating fresh, healthy, and innovative cuisine for residents of **Dunwoody Village.**

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by  
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# Dining at Dunwoody

The culinary team led by Executive Chef Derek Brewington takes pride in creating fresh, healthy, and innovative cuisine for residents of **Dunwoody Village**.

**D**erek Brewington is doing his part to change the way people think about dining in retirement communities.

“We are cooking really great food,” says Brewington, executive chef at Dunwoody Village in Newtown Square. “I know some people have the image of healthcare facility dining as just ‘scoop and serve,’ but at Dunwoody, we make food from scratch. We do batch cooking, but we try as much as possible to cook food to order.”

Dunwoody’s dining options are comparable to that of a top-tier resort. The Hearthside Bistro, open for lunch and dinner Monday through Friday, dinner Saturday, and brunch Sunday, seats 180 residents at a time, while The Fox Den, open Monday through Saturday, is a 60-seat space serving pub-style food. A fine dining eatery known as 1712 comprises a 45-seat dining room and “The Reserve,” a private space that seats up to 16 people and can be booked for occasions such as birthday parties or other special events. Residents also enjoy the convenience of The Trolley Stop, a “grab and go” spot offering premade lunch and dinner items, including hot food, salads, sandwiches, and soups 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Brewington’s team also provides delicious and nutritious meals to approximately 160 residents in Dunwoody’s healthcare areas, including rehabilitation, long-term care, personal care, and memory care.

“One of the things that attracted me to Dunwoody is that residents in independent living and residents in the care center get the same great quality of food,” he says. “For example, if we are serving a rack of lamb in independent living, the care center residents will also have rack of lamb. A lot of times the impression is that if someone is in rehab or personal care, the quality of food drops; but, if a resident in independent living transfers into personal care or skilled nursing, they’re still going to get the same quality of food. That’s one of the things that I love about here.

“Some residents have dietary restrictions, like gluten sensitivity,” he continues. “One of the things we do is use rice flour instead of regular flour when making soups or sauces, so that someone with a gluten sensitivity can have the dishes also. We do our purees in house, so if we’re doing a carrot puree, we’ll actually roast the carrots and puree them rather than getting a frozen puree.”

Such a wide array of dining options and levels of care might intimidate a lesser chef, but not Brewington. A graduate of the prestigious four-year culinary program at Johnson & Wales University in Providence, Rhode Island, Brewington has worked in high-volume kitchens for almost the entirety of his professional life. He started his culinary career while still in high school, working in dining at a local retirement community near his home in Wilmington, Delaware.

“I’ve sort of come full circle,” he says. “I started out washing dishes, but the breakfast cook kept calling out, so the chef kept having me cover. That summer, when a position became available, I became the breakfast cook for the whole summer, and it just grew from there. ... I learned all areas of the kitchen—making soups, fileting fish, butchering meats, making sauces, the whole nine yards.”

After graduating from high school, then completing his degree in Rhode Island, Brewington went on to work for companies including the Hilton Corp., Marriott International, even New York City’s beloved Shea Stadium and Aramark. For most of the last 10 years, Brewington has been working in health care.

In terms of style and technique, Brewington gravitates towards classical French. He describes his best dishes as “very clean,” in that the central ingredient has the opportunity to stand out.

“If I’m making a salmon dish, I want the salmon to be the highlight,” he says. “I’ll add little nuances like a chutney or some type of crispy shallot or leek to complement the dish, but I always allow the salmon to shine.”

Of course, nutrition and healthfulness are always of apex importance. Brewington says

he generally uses healthy fats such as olive oil to cook versus heavier fats like butter. He also picks fresh herbs from an herb garden that the residents maintain.

“Being that I cook for seniors, I like to add subtle little things to dishes,” he adds. “For example, if I make rice, I might add turmeric because it helps with inflammation. Guests will see it as an addition for flavor, but it adds a health component.

“What’s unique about Dunwoody is that I’d say 90 percent of our recipes are created in-house,” he continues, “so we don’t have a corporate structure where we get standardized recipes that we have to use or menus that are sent down. We’re able to create dishes and work with our in-house dieticians to make sure we’re meeting nutritional guidelines, but we’re also able to be very creative.”

Dishes such as classic roast chicken and mashed potatoes still have their regular place on daily menus, but Brewington says chefs have ample opportunity to bring their own unique flair to dishes. He appreciates the fact that the dishes “might be outside of residents’ comfort zones” but in a familiar way. One dish might include Moroccan spices, for example, while another might have a pronounced Cuban influence.

One popular dish is the product of such creative license.

“One of our cooks created a Jack Daniel’s Tennessee whiskey salmon that the residents love,” Brewington says. “It just keeps getting better and better. The residents know when it’s his weekend and they know every fourth Sunday, they can get their Jack Daniel’s salmon.”

Brewington believes there’s nothing wrong with having a standardized menu, because standardization does provide some useful guardrails. That said, he enjoys the challenge of creating recipes from scratch.

“Working with cooks, working with dieticians, getting everyone’s buy-in, allows cooks to have input in what we’re serving,” Brewington adds. “It helps build the team, and when a chef is able to create something with their input, I always find they’re going to add a little something more, a little love, because their name is on it.”

Of course, Brewington’s approach also benefits the people who are consuming his team’s culinary creations—namely, the residents at Dunwoody Village. ■

Chef Brewington picks fresh herbs from an onsite herb garden maintained by Dunwoody residents.



Dunwoody’s dining options are comparable to that of a top-tier resort. “We make food from scratch,” Chef Brewington says.



## Dunwoody Village

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