

Caretakers Of A Historic Washington Legacy

An Interview with David Bueno, General Manager, The Jefferson, DC

EDITORS' NOTE David Bueno is a hospitality veteran who has spent years transforming culinary and hotel teams into award-winning entities. He first joined The Jefferson, DC, in 2011 as director of food and beverage, where he helped the hotel earn high recognition, including a Forbes Five-Star rating and Michelin distinctions. Bueno was appointed hotel manager in 2013, which laid the groundwork for his promotion to general manager in 2017.



David Bueno

Will you discuss your career journey?

My hospitality journey was somewhat unconventional. I studied mechanical engineering in Spain, but I quickly discovered that my true passion lay in the art of food, wine, and hospitality. I pivoted and went on to study hospitality in Seville, later earning my MBA degree from the University of Phoenix and completing the General Manager Program at Cornell University.

Driven by a love for all things food and wine, my early career focused heavily on transforming culinary teams. I had the privilege of overseeing operations at renowned Washington, DC institutions like Taberna del Alabardero and Café Milano before beginning my tenure at The Jefferson, DC in 2011. I initially joined the team as Director of Food and Beverage, where I helped the hotel earn prestigious recognition, including a Forbes Five-Star rating and Michelin distinctions.

I was appointed Hotel Manager in 2013, which laid the groundwork for my promotion to General Manager in 2017. Today, having served as General Manager for nearly nine years, my mission remains centered on evolving this iconic hotel in ways that feel both classic and current. I operate under the guiding belief that hospitality is about harmony. Drawing from my global background, I view luxury more broadly. It isn't defined by rigid formality, but by recognizing what each guest values and delivering it with sincerity, authenticity, and precision. My focus remains steadfast on refining the guest experience and finding new ways to make our guests feel catered to, cared for, and entirely at home, all while staying true to the timeless essence of The Jefferson, DC.

What do you feel has been the key to the strength and leadership of the property?

The true strength of The Jefferson, DC comes down to our people. We don't view ourselves merely as a hotel, but as caretakers of a historic Washington legacy. For me, leadership isn't about rigid oversight; it's about creating an environment where our team is empowered to read between the lines. Our consistently high rankings and guest loyalty certainly aren't just a byproduct of our architecture or our proximity to the White House. They are the result of a team that operates with incredible precision and

discretion. Every member of our team takes personal ownership of the guest journey, anticipating needs before they are even spoken. That level of intuitive care is what creates the seamless environment our guests expect when they step through our doors.

How valuable is it for The Jefferson, DC to have such a strong suite product?

In a market like Washington, DC, where we regularly host global dignitaries, corporate leaders, and discerning leisure travelers who require both high security and residential comfort, an exceptional suite product is paramount. Our suites are designed to feel like an elegant, private home rather than a standard hotel room. They provide the space, discretion, and high-end refinement that our clientele expects. Having a thoughtfully curated collection of beautifully appointed suites allows us to accommodate extended stays and high-profile guests seeking the privacy, comfort, and sophistication of a personal residence in the nation's capital. It is a significant driver of our revenue and a cornerstone of our luxury brand identity.

How has The Jefferson, DC approached its restaurant/food and beverage offerings?

Food and beverage is the soul of The Jefferson, DC, and it's a passion very close to my heart. When I first joined this property, our mission was to elevate the dining experience to



The Jefferson, DC



the highest global standards, treating it not merely as a hotel amenity but as a premier destination for locals and global travelers alike. Our philosophy is rooted in exceptional ingredients, thoughtful preparation, and genuine hospitality. Whether you are celebrating a special occasion, hosting an important business dinner, or simply joining us for breakfast, every experience should feel thoughtful, elegant, and effortlessly welcoming. We are not simply serving a meal; we are creating an atmosphere that reflects the same level of care, refinement, and personalized service guests expect throughout the rest of the hotel.

What does luxury mean to you in today's hospitality landscape?

In today's hospitality landscape, luxury has evolved far beyond formality. True luxury is recognizing what each guest values and delivering it with absolute sincerity. It's the luxury of returning to a space where you are recognized, where your preferences are remembered without you having to say a word, and where the bustling noise of the world is instantly filtered out.

Ultimately, luxury is about delivering an authentic, sophisticated experience with a level of grace that makes every guest feel deeply cared for.

What has made the hospitality industry so special for you?

For me, it's the privilege of creating moments that become lasting memories for our guests. Hospitality is one of the few industries left where human touch, empathy, and genuine care are the primary measures of success. Every day presents a new opportunity to inspire the team, solve a unique challenge, and welcome guests. Knowing that our team creates an experience that allows guests to feel prepared for whatever comes next, whether it's an important meeting, a celebratory dinner, or a relaxing evening, is incredibly rewarding.

What advice do you offer to young people interested in building a career in the industry?

My advice is to be curious, stay adaptable, and master the art of listening. Never be afraid to pivot or reevaluate your path. As my own transition from mechanical engineering in Spain to hotel leadership shows, true passion can be discovered at any stage. To excel in luxury hospitality, you have to understand the harmony of the entire operation. Spend time with the team, learn the kitchen, the front desk, and housekeeping. Technical skills and operational mechanics can always be taught, but a sense of grace, authenticity, and care is what will truly set you apart. ●



Skylights and gates at The Jefferson, DC (top left); Wine cellar (center right); Presidential Suite parlor (bottom left); Book Room and nook (bottom right)