Youth is no obstacle for chef Christopher Coombs. This winter, at the ripe age of 28, Coombs and business partner Brian Piccini will open a new take on steakhouses, Boston Chops—their third restaurant collaboration—on Washington Street in the South End. Their partnership began in 2006 at Dbar in Dorchester, where Coombs serves seasonal and local fare such as pink-peppercorn-crusted big eye tuna and chicken under a brick. Then in 2010 came upscale Deuxave, in the Back Bay, where Coombs’s contemporary French menu includes four-week-aged premium Black Angus beef with goat cheese and potato croquette, and spiced Long Island duckling with lentils du Puy. If Boston Chops follows suit, it will be as busy—and financially successful—as its siblings.

Coombs has been interested in cooking all his life. At 11, he was washing dishes at a neighbor’s North Shore seafood restaurant. In his freshman year at Peabody Veterans Memorial High School, he got involved with the Massachusetts Restaurant Association’s ProStart School-to-Career Program, which offered cooking classes and restaurant industry
internships alongside his regular studies. "I'd do English and math and probably a science class here or there, and then I'd spend three or four periods a day in culinary class," Coombs recalls. By his sophomore year, he was a full-time student while also working full time at the Sylvan Street Grille in Peabody. During his time at the Culinary Institute of America, Coombs had his first externship with Ming Tsai at Blue Ginger in Wellesley.

Coombs went on to work at Topper's at The Wauwinet on Nantucket and then landed an 18-month stint with Patrick O'Connell, the "Pope of American Cuisine," at O'Connell's famed Inn at Little Washington in Virginia. He was part of the O'Connell team that cooked a multicourse dinner for First Lady Laura Bush, philanthropist Catherine Reynolds, and several of their friends at the White House. Returning to Boston, he worked in the kitchens of Aujourd'hui at the Four Seasons Hotel and Troquet before taking over the stove at Dbar.

Boston Chops will be a different kind of steakhouse. "Most steakhouses you go to are big fans of broiling steaks, and for me that's not a very respectful way to treat a piece of meat," Coombs says. "Certain things are best cooked in cast iron pans and rissoléd in butter with herbs and nicely seared, while other things are best cooked on the grill." Additionally Boston Chops will specialize in less familiar cuts of beef—serving many Certified Prime cuts, including hangar, flank, skirt, flat iron, and culotte (top sirloin cap) steaks, in addition to tenderloins and New York strips. "There are a lot of delicious parts of the cow that most steakhouses don't serve, which we will," Coombs says. In Boston's competitive chophouse market, Chris Coombs is raising the stakes.

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