



World Series
champ, minister,
restaurant owner
and family man.
Darryl Strawberry
has done it all.

NEW YORK BASEBALL LEGEND, **DARRYL STRAWBERRY**, IS ONE OF THE MOST BELOVED ATHLETES IN THE HISTORY OF NEW YORK SPORTS. DURING HIS 17-YEAR CAREER, HE HELPED LEAD THE NEW YORK METS TO A WORLD SERIES CHAMPIONSHIP IN 1986, AND THE NEW YORK YANKEES TO THREE WORLD SERIES CHAMPIONSHIPS.

by margie goldsmith

His 6-foot-6-inch frame intimidated the opposition and his looping swing brought comparisons to Ted Williams, especially when he dazzled the fans with home run after home run. In 40 postseason games, Strawberry hit nine home runs with 22 RBIs and 20 runs scored, was the starting right fielder five straight times and appeared at nine All-Star games. He was voted to the All-Star Game eight straight times (from 1984–1991) and batted .333 with two stolen bases and two runs in 12 career All-Star at-bats. He was inducted into the NY Mets Hall of Fame in August, 2010.

Today, 49-year-old Strawberry, who lives with his wife, Tracy, in St. Louis, is an ordained minister and spends his life helping to bring restoration to other people's lives. He is also a published memoirist ("Straw: Finding My Way," Ecco/HarperCollins, 2009), and

the owner of Strawberry's Sport Grill in Douglaston, Queens, which he opened in August 2010. Margie Goldsmith caught up with him in New York City.

MG: Prior to all the fame, who made the greatest impact in your life and why?

DS: My mom, who raised me and my sisters and brothers. She had a tremendous impact on us and always taught us what it's like to be a good person and always to have respect. No matter what the circumstances were in our lives, she instilled those values in us.

MG: And as a professional, who had the greatest impact on you?

DS: Over all, that had to be coaches, manager . . . Bill Robinson, Davy Johnson, Joe Torre, Bud Harrelson—people that were important in my career and people who helped me understand how good I could be and what I could achieve as a player.

Been There
Done That

IT'S NEVER ABOUT INDIVIDUAL RECORDS. IT'S ALWAYS ABOUT THE TEAM AND WHAT WE ACHIEVED AS A TEAM.

MG: You were only 18 when you were drafted in 1980 by Frank Cashen of the New York Mets, and in just three years, you reached the major leagues and were named the National League's Rookie of the Year. The next year, you made it to the All-Star game. How did that early success affect you?

DS: I don't think it was early success; I think it was just things that were missing from me in my childhood—from a father who wasn't available and didn't give me the right tools as a young man. I think every young man needs a father figure, no matter what. I think every young man struggles. I don't think it was part of the success of being a baseball player—I loved that part of it—but it was just about learning how to live.

MG: Why do you think you were so beloved by New Yorkers and young fans across the country?

DS: I care about people. I don't treat people as though they're a piece of nothing—never have and never will. Even though I've had my own personal history with demons, I've always looked

at people as we're all the same. I think that's why people have looked at me that way—because I've always treated fans with love and care and compassion and signed autographs, and took the time out to spend with them.

MG: In 1987, you hit 39 home runs and stole 36 bases, (joining the exclusive 30-30 club) and become one of only 10 players in baseball history to accomplish that. In addition to that, you hit 32 doubles and drove in 104 runs. The next year you also hit 39 home runs and led the Mets to the playoffs. After your 1991 season, you were only 29 years old but 280 homers. Your records are astounding. What would you say was your most exciting moment in baseball? Is it one of those records?

DS: It's never about individual records. It's always about the team and what we achieved as a team. The most exciting moment was winning the championship in 1986 with the Mets. The group of guys we had and what we accomplished as players was the most exciting time.

MG: Any advice to parents in Little League?

DS: Leave the kids alone and let them play. Have fun. It's Little League; they're not going to do miracles at 12 years old. Let them have fun. Parents put too much pressure on their kids. Let them learn to be great instead without you putting that pressure on them.

MG: Besides being a great athlete, to what do you attribute your extraordinary success as a ballplayer?

DS: I would attribute it to the fact that I had a loving mom who I dearly miss, who was the backbone of raising five kids by herself. She taught us some real value about being able to stay in and fight and not quit.

MG: What went through your head every time you were at bat that you slugged so many homers? How did you get that focus?

DS: I believed I was the best every time I stepped on the field. It didn't matter to me who I faced. I wasn't a doubter, and I wasn't a thinker. I was a doer.

MG: Do you go to baseball games in NY?

DS: Yes I do. I go to Mets games and I work for the Mets so I'm involved with baseball.

MG: What are you doing for the Mets?

DS: I'm one of the team ambassadors—I'm involved in doing community and outreach work for the team.

MG: Who are your favorite players now?

DS: Derek Jeter, Albert Pujols; I like Jose Reyes, David Wright.

MG: People have asked, are you still clean and sober?

DS: Of course! All they have to do is look at my life, pick up my book, and they can read about my life on www.darrylstrawberry.com and look at Facebook—they can see all those wonderful things.

MG: What made you decide to open a restaurant?

DS: My good friend Eytan Sugarman had been approaching me for a number of years about opening up a restaurant in Manhattan, and I said never. I'm



Strawberry's Sport Grill in Douglaston, N.Y.

living in St. Louis now, and I'm involved in the community and the ministry with my wife. He kept coming to me and I finally said, "If ever you find a place in Queens, I'll go to Queens." And we ended up finding a place in Queens. It's the ideal place for me. You know, it's in the suburbs and it's family-oriented, and I want families and kids to come in.

MG: How often do you get there?

DS: I get there quite a bit. Baseball season, and I go back and forth during the winter and spend some time there, too.

MG: What kind of food do you serve?

DS: Southern style cooking: barbecue ribs, best burgers in the world, salmon, French fries, you name it—Philly cheese, hush puppies, mac and cheese—it's a great place.

MG: What do you think of tailgating?

DS: It's a lot of fun, especially when

people set up for the games and sit out here all day—especially football season. I don't know how they sit out there in the cold and I do admire them for doing it.

MG: What would you want out there on your tailgate?

DS: Good food. A little bit of everything. I heard the best tailgates are usually in Green Bay, Wisconsin, and they eat Brats. (*See a couple of Darryl's favorite tailgating recipes from his restaurant.*)

MG: You and your wife, Tracy, founded "The Darryl Strawberry Foundation," an organization dedicated to children with autism. How did autism become your cause?

DS: My wife's sister works in the center and asked us to come visit in '06, and that was the first time I encountered kids with autism and it blew me away. I

walked out of there and said to my wife, we have to help. We'll start a nonprofit foundation and start raising money for the cause now—not for research—they have money for that—but for the cause now, which is to keep the doors open, keep the teachers working, keep the kids growing.

MG: Any last thoughts you want your fans to know?

DS: We're all here for a reason. Many are called but few are chosen. And I believe I was a chosen one to be able to spread the Word, spread the Gospel and help those that are less fortunate; and I'm just doing my part and I just want to continue doing my part. I want my fans to know that I love and care about people in America, and I love and care about the hurting people, too. ■

IT'S A LOT OF FUN, ESPECIALLY WHEN PEOPLE SET UP FOR THE GAMES AND SIT OUT HERE ALL DAY—ESPECIALLY FOOTBALL SEASON.



Championship Chili

Recipe courtesy of Strawberry's Sports Grill

- 4 pounds ground chuck
- 3 green bell peppers, diced
- 2 Spanish onions, diced
- 9 tablespoons ground cumin
- 4 tablespoons garlic powder
- 1/2 cup dark chili powder
- 1 can diced tomatoes
- 1 quart beef stock
- 4 cups pinto beans
- 2 pounds diced barbecue brisket
- 3 tablespoons kosher salt
- 2 oz. Chipotle TABASCO®
- 1/3 cup dark brown sugar

IN A DEEP STOCK POT render the ground beef; drain the fat from the beef. Remove the beef from the pot. In the same pot, add all the vegetables and cook until tender. Add the tomatoes, beef stock and the cooked beef back to the pot. Add the TABASCO®, beans and all the spices to the pot. Simmer for one hour, adjusting the seasoning.

SERVE with chopped red onions, sour cream, shredded cheddar cheese and nacho chips.



Strawberry Burger (Double-Beef Burger)

Recipe courtesy of Strawberry's Sports Grill

- 4 10 oz. ground chuck burgers
- 4 large potato rolls
- 8 oz. barbecue brisket, diced and seasoned with dry rub & barbecue sauce.
- 8 oz. barbecue sauce
- 8 oz. coleslaw (2 oz. per burger)
- 4 tablespoon barbecue dry rub
- 1 large Vidalia onion for onion strings
- 2 cups seasoned flour

TAKE each burger and separate them in half; take one side and form a patty with the sides folded up and take the other half and form a flat patty. Take 2 ounces of the brisket mixture and spoon it into the patties that have the sides folded up. Then take the flattened patties and place on top of the filled section; closing up the sides. Wrap each burger in plastic wrap and refrigerate. The burgers cook better once they are chilled all the way through.

PREHEAT a grill or a grill style cast iron pan. Season the burger with barbecue dry rub on both sides liberally. Place on the grill and cook to the desired temperature. As the burger is cooking, cook your onion strings and toast the roll. Take the roll and place the coleslaw on each burger, then top with the burger. Next top each burger with 2 ounces of barbecue sauce; then the onion strings. Place the top of the bun on the burger and serve with fries.