



The Bluegrass Summit

A gathering of music lovers descended on Chapel Hill to discuss the history, tradition, and future of the genre. See page C4

the good life

IN A NORTH STATE OF MIND

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MADELINE GRAY | NORTH STATE JOURNAL

Carroll's Kitchen
Raleigh
Liz Reedy, left, and Vanessa McCarthy, right, joke around at Carroll's Kitchen. The goal of Carroll's Kitchen is to provide support, job skills training, and future opportunities for women experiencing homelessness.

Intersecting food and charity, two restaurants share similar goals

King's Kitchen in Charlotte and Carroll's Kitchen in Raleigh are both using the job-training blueprint to provide culinary jobs in the food service industry while improving their communities.

By Alison Miller
For the North State Journal

AT 10 MINUTES TO 3, they start filing in. Some drag wheeled suitcases, others carry plastic grocery bags stuffed with personal belongings. At the door of King's Kitchen in Uptown Charlotte, they're given a ticket, good for one fresh-cooked hot meal. They find seats in the restaurant's dining room, and over the clatter of the open kitchen, gather around as Chef Jim Noble begins his bible study.

King's Kitchen is a fully functioning restaurant operated by a professional staff, including Chef Cody Suddreth, who sharpened his skills at several James Beard Award-winning restaurants in the South. To be sure, it's one of the best places to eat in Uptown Charlotte. But it's also a nonprofit that feeds and mentors people in need.

How Jim Noble, one of Charlotte's most revered restaurateurs, established this altruistic mission, dates back to 1998 when Noble, an ordained minister, and his wife, Karen, established Restoration Word Ministries. To him, it's simple:

"Restaurants are inefficient food manufacturing facilities," he explains. "They have a lot of down



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King's Kitchen
Charlotte
Volunteers fill boxes with food from King's Kitchen, the bible study attendees receive the hot meal after the service.

competition dining | statewide

NC chefs compete in homage to their home state

By Laura Ashley Lamm
North State Journal

WITH CREATIVE FLAIR, the perfect recipe, farm fresh ingredients and the skill to duel in the kitchen, the Got to Be NC Competition Dining Series is heating up this weekend for its final battle.

The Competition Series pits the top chefs from around North Carolina against one another in a series of food battles until a champion is crowned with diners placing the votes and determining the winners.

“This mission is to create an emotionally inspired diner experience that creatively brings together the chef, the farmer, and the diner,” said founder Jimmy Crippen.

The series is deigned to celebrate local North Carolina produce and agriculture; to showcase culinary ingenuity; and to highlight the talent of chefs from around the state.

“We’re turning chefs into local celebrities and increasing business to their restaurants. We’re placing the farmer’s products in front of chefs. We’re giving diners a unique dinner that is here and gone,” he added.

The idea for the Competi-

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— Jimmy Crippen, founder

tion Dining Series was created in 2005 in Blowing Rock while Crippen was overseeing his own restaurant, Crippen’s, one of High County’s first fine dining establishments. A partnership with the N.C. Department of Agriculture expanded the dining series across the state in 2012. This year, the Competition Dining Series began in April and traveled through the cities of Durham, Winston-Salem, Greensboro, Raleigh, Charlotte and Wilmington.

From a pile of applications from talented chefs across the state, the top chefs were selected to compete. Guests are treated to a six-course blind dinner in which the visitors taste three dishes from each team without knowing

what team prepared which dish. Guests then cast votes for presentation, aroma, flavor and creativity. The winning team moves on to the next round until there is only one team left standing and crowned the winner.

The 2016 Battle of Champions, the final dinner event being held in Raleigh today, will mark the official end of the Got to Be NC Competition Dining Series. After five years of celebrating North Carolina’s agriculture and culinary talent through more than 300 interactive dinner events, 1,830 locally sourced dishes and more than 30,000 fed people across the state, Crippen is retiring the competition in order to pursue other ventures.

“It has always been my underlining goal for North Carolina to be one of the great foodie states in the country,” said Crippen. “We have great restaurants and great chefs throughout the state. People talk about California, Florida, New York and Illinois as food states, but North Carolina has become one of those.”

“Through working with Got to Be NC, we are highlighting the awareness of products grown, made, caught and raised in North Carolina,” said Crippen. “It’s only natural to cook it up.”



PHOTO COURTESY OF COMPETITION DINING NC

James “JP” Patterson leads his team during plate preparation. Patterson is the captain of the Sedgefield Culinary Crushers — they emerged as Champions out of the Greensboro bracket in 2016.

Joanne Lowry leads a bible study at King’s Kitchen. The restaurant opens to the public Monday-Friday at 3:00 p.m. for a sermon and a free hot meal.



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time. We realized we had the horsepower to feed people, and the ministry had the ability to raise funds and recruit volunteers, so we put the two together.” That was in 2010.

To the well-dressed, high-rise workforce of Uptown, King’s Kitchen is a favorite spot for oyster po’ boys and after-work drinks. But to another demographic, it’s a helping hand. “Anytime someone walks in the door and they look like they need help, we offer it,” says general manager Yuri Oliveira. “If they need a sleeping bag, a jacket, or a box of food, we do what we can to help them.”

In 2014, Noble launched the Charlotte Mecklenburg Dream Center, joining forces with the Los Angeles-based nonprofit of the same name, which offers food, medical services, rehabilitation programs, housing, skills training, and more to the homeless. On Friday nights in Charlotte, staff and volunteers wander the streets with water, personal hygiene kits, and King’s Kitchen chili cheese dogs for people who need them. On Saturday morn-



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Alejandra Gonzalez, of Raleigh, makes sandwiches at Carroll’s Kitchen. The goal of Carroll’s Kitchen is to provide support, job skills training and future opportunities for women experiencing homelessness.

ings, a crew picks up trash, helps with home repairs, and puts on cookouts and kids activities in the J.T. Williams and Reid Park neighborhoods, both sites of the Dream Center’s adopt-a-block mission. And on Sundays, Jim Noble leads a church service in the dining room of King’s Kitchen, followed by a sit-down meal served by volunteers.

“It gives them a chance to sit

in a restaurant environment and have someone wait on them,” says Bo Frowine, Charlotte Mecklenburg Dream Center’s executive director. “It’s an opportunity for us to give back, and do it with dignity.”

The Charlotte Mecklenburg Dream Center also facilitates a year-long paid internship program at King’s Kitchen, that, coupled with financial and life skills classes and bible studies, is designed to get people get off the streets. Noble’s next goal? A multipurpose building to provide housing and classrooms for those in the program.

In Raleigh, a similar effort is underway. In late September, Carroll’s Kitchen, a grab-and-go breakfast and lunch spot, opened on the corner of Wilmington and Martin near Moore Square, in the space vacated by longtime sandwich shop The Square Rabbit.

Carroll’s Kitchen executive director Jim Freeze and board president Vicky Ismail met at Vintage Church in downtown Raleigh. Freeze, a West Point graduate and Iraq War veteran, was working as the church’s facility manager when he met Ismail,

a restaurateur who ran The Cary Café for 18 years and now owns and operates Highgrove Estate, a wedding and event venue in Fuquay-Varina.

Via the church’s outreach program, Freeze worked with Raleigh Rescue Mission and saw first-hand the effects of homelessness and poverty in Raleigh. After reading a story about King’s Kitchen, Ismail approached Freeze with the concept of Carroll’s Kitchen, a restaurant whose profits fund life skills and finance courses, job training, and housing for women living in shelters, many of who are victims of domestic violence and human trafficking.

Carroll’s Kitchen currently provides full-time employment to two formerly homeless women. Freeze expects to work with 8-10 women within a year.

“Seeing the pride the women in our program have when they watch people buy the food they’ve worked so hard to produce, the food they’ve poured their hearts into, that’s the best part of my job,” says Freeze. “To see how that impacts their confidence—I’m going to remember that forever.”