

Tell us about the Good Fork.

The Good Fork started in late 2009 and is a local upscale catering company that operates under the farm-to-table practice. We do everything from private in-home dinners to special events such as anniversaries and weddings. We use only local produce, and we are able to sustain ourselves by simply using local farmers.

You trained with the French Culinary Institute in New York City, and Alma in Parma, Italy. What did you learn in your time there that you have brought back with you?

I learned that the true heart of Italian cooking is different from region to region. It's a lifestyle. It's about movement on the plate, not just stuff stacked up in one meaningless tower. And we learned about only using what we literally had access to just right outside the restaurant. Very great lessons learned in sustainability.

Describe your farm-fresh menu.

My menus are always simple yet elegant consisting of five ingredients or less on your plate. It's not always necessary to braise, poach, and sauté, the less we touch the food the more honest the taste is of what you're actually eating. People are starting to understand the importance of whole foods. They appreciate organic, and they want to hear exactly where their food is coming from. We are getting back to knowing the people who grow our food!

How does using farm-fresh ingredients help you when creating your menu?

I normally get my inspiration for my next great dish by going to the market. I see all of these vibrant colors and amazing vegetables, and I get inspiration and come up with dishes when I see something beautiful, like right now it's all about the fragrant heirloom tomatoes and eggplant. When people contact me there is no preset menu. Using fresh ingredients, the menu should change weekly. For instance, in the spring there are wild ramps and those are only available for a few weeks. I base my menus on the season, the month, or the week.

What got you interested in becoming a chef?

I have always been creative and artistic and thought differently than most people (left-handed, Libra, and the middle sibling). You eat with your eyes first. If something you see is a piece of artwork on a plate, you are much more inclined to eat it and love it.

For more information on The Good Fork contact Chef Mary at (330) 605-8368 or visit www.thegoodfork.net.



WITH CHEF MARY WILLS
THE GOOD FORK