

The Inaugural Club Chef's Institute at the Greenbrier

COULD YOUR MENU USE A FACELIFT? ARE YOU LOOKING FOR WAYS TO ENHANCE YOUR BUFFET? HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE TO BECOME A MASTER CHEF? WELL, YOU CAN FIND OUT BY ATTENDING THE CLUB CHEF'S INSTITUTE AT THE GREENBRIER.

This amazing historical hotel nestled in the hills of White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia offers a true American getaway experience with four-star dining and a reputation for its unparalleled apprentice program. Now, thanks to Rod Stoner, food and beverage manager at the Greenbrier, the school's doors are open to professionals.

The Club Manager's Association of America sponsors this outstanding new learning resource for club chefs. It is jam-packed with certified master chef presenters and professional chefs willing to spend their time "telling all" and giving away their newest developments to kick-start your operation.

I had the privilege of attending this cutting-edge, informational seminar for chefs in late 2004. The first day opened with a presentation by the Greenbrier's executive chef, Peter Timmins, CMC, who introduced a

concept he called "small bites," which is basically a tapas approach to a station buffet or any other suitable application.

On stage with Chef Timmins was Lawrence McFadden, CMC, corporate chef for the Ritz-Carlton. Chef McFadden gave a presentation based on events at the Ritz while Chef Timmins demonstrated a few small bites right before our eyes. He sailed effortlessly through an Asian pork small bite presentation with glass noodles and bass with lobster crust.

Chef McFadden's event displays were out of this world. They included cardboard barrels, covered with paper adorned with Japanese characters. These served as vehicles for hundreds of beautiful Asian style baby bites lined in perfect rows. Rather than the traditional skirted buffet table, Lucite tops were under-lit with rows of flowers, seeds and spices characteristic to the small bite dishes above them.

Chef McFadden explained that the Ritz-Carlton not only does parties of 50, 100 or 200 in this fashion, his team will set up literally thousands of these small bites for parties of 1,200 or more. This seemed implausible to the nearly 300 club chefs in attendance, but it was true.

Everyone was awestruck.

Following the presentation, it was off to lunch where the small bite and action stations were put into effect. It was flawless; each dish tasting better than the last. One item in particular, which caught my eye (and my taste buds) was a lobster burger station. Two of Chef Timmins' many apprentices were pan-frying a lobster farce and slapping it atop a yellow tomato on a delicious house-made soft roll.

Had they stopped right there I would have been in heaven, but no, a rich slab of perfectly cooked turchon au foie gras finished it off. Needless to say, all left lunch happy, looking forward to another dynamic seminar.

The next speaker, Brett W. Horton of James Madison University was fun and informational. His presentation included some costing exercises and hints for quick and easy ways to choose peeled products versus raw based on cost/quality analysis.



The afternoon consisted of a powerhouse master chef panel. Ed Leonard, ACF president and executive chef, Westchester Country Club; Harmet Hanke, previously with The Greenbrier and now of Henke's; Lawrence McFadden, corporate chef, Ritz-Carlton Hotels; Jon Johnstone, Ritz-Carlton, Naples, Fla.; and Farmer Lee Jones from Chef's Garden Farms in Ohio.

The panel discussed food trends, and although some said they altered dishes because of the Atkins and South Beach diets, most agreed that these were fads and were not to be taken too seriously. They did make a point of stressing issues such as small bites, local seasonal menus and ingredients, and simple, straightforward use of "center of the plate" ingredients. Globalization of all cuisines seemed to be at the forefront of trends; meaning it will be more important as time goes on for chefs to know all types of cuisine, not just their own.

The day wrapped up with a "small bite" dine-around station buffet where each master chef worked a station. Chef Harmet Henke prepared a seafood sausage accompanied by sauerkraut and mustard butter, Chef Ed Leonard prepared a delicious white truffle risotto with sweetbread ragout and Chef Jon Johnstone had dressing filled quails and many more wonderful bites to taste and taste again.

The following day, Chef Timmins gave a presentation on menus, recipe writing and much more while USA Culinary Team member and Greenbrier Tavern Room chef Richard Rosendale demonstrated new ways of presenting classical dishes such as Caesar salad and steak tartar.

Lunch was an exquisitely authentic Asian-fusion meal that began with

gyoza and spring rolls, tofu soup and sushi. It included Chinese-style roast pork over glass noodles, the dish Chef Timmins demonstrated the day before. The meal ended with coconut tapioca pudding, coconut ice cream and a delicious cookie crunch.

The afternoon was free to choose between two different seminars and a cyber salon with the newest chef technology. I chose the cyber salon, and one presentation specifically caught my eye. It was a computerized inventory/ordering system that was simple and fast to use. A job that used to take eight skilled employees five to six hours now takes one or two employees just two to three hours.

The closing dinner event was fun and inspiring. Chef Timmins and his crew served up a "killer" surf and turf with style while Chef Mark Erickson used a remote voting system that allowed the audience to participate and vote on fun and interesting topics of the evening such as which wine complemented a dish best and if we thought the sorbet was appropriate for the dinner or if it was passé. The system gave instant results, in the form of bar and pie charts on a screen, as people punched in their selection to a handheld device. I will definitely be checking into this system for

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the story, I asked what I should have done differently. The doctor explained that paper towels or tissues should never be used as they dissolve into the cut. If the cut seals up the wound will have to be reopened to remove the paper, so use cloth or gauze.

I had assumed that my 'nick' was going to require six or seven stitches but when I asked the doc, he said it should only take four. He administered the anesthesia and I looked away while he stitched. I will admit to flinching quite a few times. When finished, he had given me six stitches. The way he made that statement, I wondered if the insurance company dictated that only four stitches be used on an index finger cut?

What did I learn? When a knife feels dull, STOP, and sharpen it!

Other thoughts on knife safety

If you drop a knife let it fall. Don't try to grab it (or kick it). I have seen the results of such actions and it is a lot worse than a few stitches.

Don't put knives in the sink. When I worked as a pot washer, I found one the hard way! Luckily I found the handle before the blade in that soapy water.

A knife drawer may not be the best mode of storage.

Dividers inside the drawer or a block unit may be better than loose storage.

Do NOT walk with a knife in hand.

Do NOT turn and talk to someone with a knife in hand. You could stab someone.

A few closing thoughts

Knife safety is a tremendous undertaking and training should be continual because of the constant turnover in this industry. Training may include servers, bus persons, snack bar and bartenders. First responders must also be knowledgeable in first aid and blood borne pathogen clean-up procedures.

Safety can never be taken for granted, even by a safety pro. If you had told me that I was going to cut myself with one of my own knives, and end up with six stitches, I would have laughed at you. But now, I don't mind if you laugh at me as long as you (or your staff) do not suffer a similar malady. 🍷

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The Beach Club. Gregg Patterson, The Beach Club's general manager, and known wild man, could really have some fun with it.

By the last day, after most had left, I was one of the few remaining to witness the incredible display presented by The Greenbrier's apprentices. Two young chefs, Michael Materaza and Drew Garns, made quite an impression. Each is a graduate of the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park and soon-to-be graduate of the Greenbrier's apprentice program. These young chefs will be leaving The Greenbrier before you know it, so if you have a need for good—no, amazing—talent, let me know.

I hope to see everyone at the "Second Annual Club Chef's Institute"

at the Greenbrier October 30 to November 2, 2005. For more information, contact The Greenbrier directly at (304) 536-1110, ext. 7112 or club_chefs@greenbrier.com. 🍷

Chef Whitney Werner, CEC, is executive chef at The Beach Club in Santa Monica, Calif. and president and co-founder of Club Culinary. He is president of the American Culinary Federation's "Chefs de Cuisine of Ca Los Angeles" chapter and president of Les Amis de Escoffier Society of California. Chef Whitney is a speaker and educator who provides consulting services to membership clubs and the hospitality industry.

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