

We love to entertain in our home at Grandfather, but you can also find us enjoying all that our club offers too!

I'm excited to feature the club's new executive chef, Will Hicks. At just thirty-three years old, Will comes to Grandfather after earning his culinary degree at Johnson & Wales and working in some of the country's most prestigious kitchens. He was chef de cuisine at the Country Club of Virginia, sous chef at the famous Greenbrier Hotel, banquet cook at Colorado's five-star Broadmoor Hotel, and banquet supervisor/*tournant* at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in Orlando. He also cooked on the line in well-known Charlotte restaurants, including Taverna 100 and Mimosa.

Will, who grew up in the heart of the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia, is proud of the hands-on experience and wisdom he gathered from what he calls a food-centric family that always spent a lot of time outdoors. "My dad works in the dairy business and my mom in accounting," says Will. "They both have strong work

ethics that they passed down to me and my three siblings. They wanted us to know how to take care of ourselves."

Will's father is also an avid cook and maintains a large garden. It was not unusual for Will to spend weekend days splitting wood, going hunting, picking vegetables in the garden, and helping with the meals. His mother focused on teaching the kids how to manage their finances and the importance of being organized. The siblings all love to cook and are always trying to one-up each other on new recipes.

"My brother sends me pictures of dishes he's made, saying they are so much better than anything I could cook."

When I ask him what he loves the most about his job, Will says it's the personal interactions. "In a professional kitchen, everyone is pouring themselves into making one dish or one meal – there's so much personality and emotion in that room. There's nothing like the feeling of fulfillment when you know you've made the perfect dinner for someone." Those of us who love to cook for others



Chef Will with sommelier Melissa Hemmingway

know that feeling well.

When asked what he enjoys about entertaining at home, Will says that it's a chance to give of yourself, to share your personality and a part of your history. One of his favorite mottoes? The six P's: Proper Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance.

His most important advice? *Have fun!*

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– WILL HICKS

WILL'S WISDOM

- Cook to your comfort level. If you love to cook, buy that new piece of equipment; try that new recipe. If cooking new things terrifies you, stick to something safe, like a slow-cooker recipe. People will love the meal they have in your home either way.
- Relax. If you're stressed out about the food you make, it's going to stress people out to eat it. Your guests want things to go well for your sake, but it will make them uncomfortable if it seems like you're trying too hard.
- Have fun, but maintain self-control. Don't drink too much before you cook (your recipes will suffer!), and don't get so caught up in enjoying your own party that you forget to take care of your guests!
- Don't be nervous. Make it easy on yourself and let people bring things; think about a potluck. It changes the energy in a room when people are excited about what they brought. Definitely don't be nervous about cooking for a chef. They are not going to judge you, and they'll be so glad they didn't have to do the cooking!