

He's a chef extraordinaire!

By Olga Gize Carlile
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Michael Staver has done it all, and now he's into organic gardening, running flowers and herbs to Chicago markets with his wife, Jeanie, teaching courses at Kendall College and cooking up special parties for guests.

His food loves are many. He's an expert with French sauces, a barbecue champion in at least four states, and knows how to marry flavors with herbs.

Classically trained in the French cooking style, he says he likes to cook fresh and easy and

"from scratch" – even macaroni and cheese.

Michael has Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degrees in the biological sciences. He's retired from Abbott Labs as a research molecular biologist, specializing in cancer research. He has published some 30 articles and has two patents.

He's always had a passion for good food and food preparation. When he decided on a career change, he enrolled at Kendall College in Chicago and earned a culinary degree.

Since then, he's been in the catering business and won many awards for his barbecue techniques. He's very much into

organic foods and the "slow food" movement – slow cooking at low temperatures for maximum flavor results. Yes, he's very interested in the genesis of flavor and has a "magic way" with it.

The couple's Brightflower Nursery is a USDA certified organic farm. Jeanie specializes in herbs and cut flowers, while vegetables are his specialty.

Also, Michael is a chef instructor at Kendall College, where he teaches food science, cheese making, fermentation, the "Art of BBQ," helps run the Production Cafe, substitutes for other culinary classes and also teaches environmental science.

He has been in the catering

business since 2000 and sold barbecue for 20 years. He's also won awards for barbecue in Indiana, Iowa, Illinois and Texas.

He's genial, a good conversationalist and exciting to be with. In minutes, he prepared a great luncheon for four. It was wonderful – juicy and infused with herbs. He always brings in seasonal delights, and at his meals serves organic, farm-fresh ingredients right from his garden.

He's shared recipes that reflect the foods he likes to cook.

Michael said he likes teaching and catering teaching dinner parties, "particularly for discriminating people who enjoy good food." He is mulling the possibility of opening a small restaurant with a few tables and a fixed menu.



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Michael Staver is classically trained in the French style of cooking.

Pesto

6 ounces fresh basil leaves
1 tablespoon garlic
12 ounces olive oil
3 ounces pine nuts
1 to 2 pats butter
4 ounces grated Parmesan
4 ounces grated Romano
Salt to taste

Place 1/3 of the olive oil in a blender. Add all the remaining ingredients, except butter. Blend until smooth. Add the remaining olive oil. Add butter before serving with 3 tablespoons of pasta water.

Fresh Tomato Sauce

Fresh Roma tomatoes, chopped
1 small onion, diced
1 small carrot, diced
1 to 2 garlic cloves, diced
Fresh basil
Fresh oregano
Fresh thyme
Olive oil
Butter
Salt and pepper

Sweat onion, carrots and garlic in olive oil until tender. Add tomatoes, oregano and thyme. Simmer until thickened. Add chopped basil, adjust seasonings and serve over warm pasta that has been tossed with a fragrant olive oil

Putanesca Sauce

4 to 10 Roma tomatoes
4 tablespoons olive oil
2 cloves garlic, minced
2/3 cup pitted Kalamata olives
2 tablespoons capers, rinsed
Basil, to taste
Small amount crushed red peppers
2 to 3 anchovies

Heat oil in a large frying pan. Add garlic and crushed red peppers. Cook until garlic is golden. Add the anchovies and mash them into the oil until they dissolve. Add tomatoes, olives and capers. Cook over moderate heat. Stir in pasta and warm through. Serve with chopped basil on the top and grated Parmesan cheese on the side

Chicken Teriyaki

Chicken thighs that have the skin and excess fat removed

Marinade:
1 cup high quality soy sauce (for example, Kikkoman)
2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh ginger
1 tablespoon powdered mustard
2 tablespoons rice vinegar
2 tablespoons sesame oil
1 tablespoon fish sauce
1 tablespoon garlic powder (do not use garlic salt)

Mix together in a zip lock bag. Marinate chicken thighs from 1 hour to overnight. Grill and enjoy.

"The marinade is very versatile and works well with fresh tuna steaks, pork chops, pork tenderloin and Mahi-mahi. I even mix it with crème fraiche for a quick sauce," said Chef Michael.

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