

Monday, July 9, 2007

On the job

Marc D. Reece Owner, The Renegade Gourmet, Grafton

What do you do?

"I'm a personal chef. I go into people's homes, help teach them how to cook. I also do catering events, and I host a radio show called "Cooking for the Culinary Impaired" on WCRN AM 830, heard every Saturday at 4 p.m."

How did you get into this field?

"I always had a passion for cooking, but I never realized that I could make any money doing it ... I was in corporate America. I had lost a big deal. I came home, and I was kind of flipping through the cable channels, and all of a sudden I saw this thing called the Food Network, and literally as I turned on the Food Network, I saw this guy go 'Bam!' in front of a live audience ... He's laughing, having a good time and I'm like, 'Well, I can do that.' ... I enrolled basically pretty much the next day in culinary school, and in August I was out of corporate America, back to culinary school. From culinary school, I really started working with the pastry chefs and transferred to Johnson and Wales University in Rhode Island for a degree in pastry arts."

Why do a cooking show on the radio?

"The radio show is local, but it hits five states. And the name of the show is 'Cooking for the Culinary Impaired,' and one of the things that I found is that when you go into people's homes, I think they're afraid of cooking. They really are mystified by this whole process called cooking. And cooking is really, in my opinion, is learning how to manipulate food over a heat source to prepare a meal ... So they can listen to my radio show, they can go to my Web site, they can actually listen to the audio again, they can look at my recipes that I put up, and we're creating audio links ... They can hear me specifically talk about that recipe. So it's like having me in their home, 24/7."

Why do you think so many people are culinary impaired?

"Because nobody cooks anymore, especially in today's lifestyle. You have divorced families. You have mom working, dad working. Sometimes they're working two or three jobs, and it's just more convenient to go to Burger King or some of these fast food restaurants and bag it ... When I was growing up, my grandmother, who's Italian, she always cooked, and Sunday literally was Prince spaghetti day at the house, where we had enough food to feed the entire block ... I'd be like, 'Why are you making so much, grandma?' And she'd be like, 'Well, everybody's got to eat.' So you'd have people coming over, knocking on the door. That was passed down to me, but it's not passed down any more. It's really becoming literally a dying art. I'm trying to revive that."



Marc D. Reece posts recipes and audio clips from his radio show at www.renegadegourmet.com. (T&G Staff / TOM RETTIG)

Age: 38

Family: Divorced, one daughter

Resident of: Grafton

Native of: Chicago

Time in current job: 3 months

On one of your shows, you said you could teach a guy how to cook a meal to impress a date. What would you advise him to cook?

"I actually did this for a person ... We basically made Beef Wellington. I made a cucumber salad with some dill, and we put those in wine glasses. We bought some puff pastry and we bought a tenderloin. We seared the tenderloin. We bought some blue cheese and chopped up some mushrooms and we put that on the puff pastry with the tenderloin. We wrapped that up. We put that in the oven. Meanwhile we buttered a ready-to-bake pie crust, one of those ones you can roll out now. We bought some instant pudding. Instead of milk, added cream, and then added some fresh fruit on top of that. Then we bought some asparagus. I taught him how to sauté asparagus. The whole meal was done in an hour and a half."

Did it impress the date?

"From what I heard, they're still together."

Is there anything you won't cook?

"I cook anything. I sometimes even make my own dog food."

What's the best part of your job?

"The best part of my job I think is really going out and actually talking to people at events, doing the radio show, and I'm also beginning to work with the Worcester County Food Bank. My show's about feeding people, and there's a lot of people in Worcester, in Massachusetts, for example, that are hungry."

What's the worst part of your job?

"The worst part, the hardest part of the job, is really doing all the information gathering and doing all the research so that we have all the answers and then putting them up on the Web site ... I have two other employees right now, or partners I should say, and I'm hoping to grow that within the next year to have somebody type the recipes, to have somebody go out and sell sponsorships on the Web. ... I've always had this idea. Within the last three months it's just grown exponentially."

Compiled by: Business reporter Lisa Eckelbecker

To have or suggest a job profile, send information to Bob Kievra, Telegram & Gazette, Box 15012, Worcester, MA 01615-0012, or send an e-mail to rkievra@telegram.com.



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