

January - March 2011

Personal Chef

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE UNITED STATES PERSONAL CHEF ASSOCIATION



Tim Hering
Dinner Magician
Personal Chef Service

Tim Hering

The Dinner Magician

Personal Chef Service



*From dishwasher to head chef to soap maker to personal chef, **Personal Chef Tim Hering** has had a varied and eclectic career path. But no matter what he was doing, the kitchen and the opportunity to provide healthy, tasty food, always called to him.*

Chef Tim Hering CPC

- President – Western PA Chapter of the USPCA
- Owner – Dinner Magician Personal Chef Service
- cheftim@dinnermagician.com
- Trained by the Culinary Business Academy in October of 2008.
- CPC (Certified Personal Chef since 2010)
- President and founding member of the Western PA Chapter (West PA Chefs)
- Pennsylvania Culinary Institute in 1999

Why Tim decided to become a Personal Chef

Of his experience prior to becoming a personal chef, Tim says, “I’ve almost always worked in restaurants. I started as a dishwasher when I was 13 in order to make money to go to summer camp and quickly became one of the cooks in that restaurant. I managed a variety of pizza places while in college, and while I love pizza, I’ve always loved to cook a wide variety of dishes. I attended the Pennsylvania Culinary Institute in 1999 and since then I’ve worked with various chefs in the Pittsburgh area in positions such as Roundsman, Kitchen Manager, and as Head Chef. At one point I developed a new breakfast and dinner menu for a pizza place that wanted to add a dining room and menu to their existing pizza and subs selection.”

Regarding sales and marketing experiences, Tim said, “I worked in telemarketing and tried my hand at working retail at Circuit City. I quickly realized that continuing to try to sell someone something after they said “no” was not something I was good at! While being a personal chef also involves sales and marketing, the difference now is that I truly believe in the value of what I do and am more willing to tell people all about it. Magazines and small electronics just didn’t do it for me.”

He had been considering becoming a personal chef for several years prior to actually taking the Culinary Business Academy Undergraduate course in Atlanta in October of 2008. He had gone so far as to create a website, come up with a business name and even had his first nightmare client. He had researched the three associations that were in existence at the time, but thought he could make a go of it on his own since he had many years of restaurant kitchen experience. That first client made him quickly realize that it was going to take a bit more than knowing how to cook to actually start his own business.

Tim’s cheerleading team to make the change to a cheffing career was led by his partner, Jordan. They had spent many hours over the preceding months starting a handmade soap business (Soap Alchemy). Tim had designed all the packaging and the brochures, the marketing folders and the point-of-sale boxes. They had been traveling around the country to wholesale trade shows, and while he was enjoying that challenge, he missed being in the kitchen cooking for people. They decided that once they had Soap Alchemy to a point where it wasn’t necessary for Tim to spend all of his time marketing the soap, it would be a good time for him to take the CBA Personal Chef course and start building his personal chef business. As both businesses have grown, balancing has become a challenge, but so far, Tim says he is making it work.

What was the most valuable advice received during your training?

“I had a great group of chefs as instructors at the CBA campus in Atlanta”, Tim said, “and I’m going to say that it wasn’t advice as much as it was the example my instructors set for the class. The instructors explained their businesses and how they all had set their sights on what they wanted to do. It wasn’t easy, but they did what they needed to do and stuck with it, all while having fun!”

“They were still having fun when they were teaching us and it showed. I think that said a lot not only for them as businesswomen and chefs, but for the USPCA and Culinary Business Academy and what setting your sights on

your dreams can do for you. The lesson I got from them was that you cannot give up even when the going seems hard. If you want something enough, then you can reach your goals and doing the thing you love to do makes reaching those goals that much sweeter”.

About joining the USPCA

“From my instructors at Culinary Business Academy, to Gail, who has always been willing to offer advice and encouragement, to Phil and Vince and everyone at the home office, to the support from the members, joining the USPCA has been the best decision I have made. Having a chapter in the area has allowed me to interact on a personal level with a variety of chefs and learn much more than I could have on my own.”

“And this is all in addition to the resources offered by the USPCA. The message board has a vast amount of information for chefs in addition to the magazine and the wide array of resources included in our membership. Being able to have the liability insurance through the association has allowed me to go out and cook without needing to come up with an additional chunk of money for that. The price for the insurance alone would be more than the membership if I were to get that separately. The ability to continue my education through following the outline for becoming a Certified Personal Chef, and then maintain that is invaluable. Having the National Conference each year is another way to stay motivated and learn new things”.

What were his biggest start up challenges?

Tim says his biggest challenge was coming to terms with the fact that there are many people who can benefit from the services of a personal chef, but not all of those people can afford it. Since he lives about an hour away from the nearest major city, and a half hour away from a smaller and more economically depressed one, he had the choice of either undervaluing the service to gain clients or take the time to show the community the value of his service while not undercutting the price he wanted to charge.

The trick in his small town has been identifying people that could afford his services, setting a fair value for those services and then making that fit into the budgets of the people in his community. He could have a full schedule of core services booked if he lowered the price of his services, but doing so would make it unprofitable, which would defeat the purpose of going into business. Having a full slate of clients, but still needing to struggle to make ends meet didn't make any sense, so after the first year in business, it became apparent to him that people would love to hire a personal chef, but didn't see how they can afford it. He solved that problem by spending time emphasizing the benefits of hiring a personal chef. Like many people across the nation, most of the community near him is under the impression that only the wealthy can afford a personal chef, and it has really become a mission for Tim to debunk that myth.

In Tim's neck of the woods, it's difficult to specialize in any one thing. His shopping options are limited, so if he can't find everything needed for the cook day at one of the small grocery stores or one of two Walmarts, he

would have to make a day trip to Pittsburgh to get it and that would become expensive. He works hard to stress healthy or at least healthier alternatives by asking his clients to allow him to make small changes to the menus so he can shop locally.

Special Services offered

Chef Tim offers a variety of services from the core personal chef service to Interactive Cooking Classes, Demonstrations, Children's Cooking Parties and Culinary Team Building for corporations. Chef Tim also offers cooking classes for area

YMCA's and libraries. These have generally been for kids, but recently he has received requests for classes for adults.

“Currently I have a class every week at the YMCA called “Little Chefs”. This is a class for kids and their families where I take every day recipes that most of them would make at home and try to make them with healthier ingredients. The kids and families have a great time, and it's fun to have the kids participate in making the food. As I've said before, the options we have in the area for shopping are not the greatest and recently, it's been getting worse with the large influx of “Great Value” products at Walmart. Everyone wants to give their families a healthy meal, but the hidden additives in some of these products is making that difficult. I try to show them what to buy and what to look out for. It can be done without breaking the food budget, but you can no longer rely on doing the perimeter sweep of the grocery store for the healthier items like you could in the past. You have to read the labels. A lot of people do not realize what is being added to some of these products and naturally assume that it's simply just what the name says it is.”

“I try to offer classes which give people ideas on making small changes in their purchasing habits that will have an impact on their diets and get their children to be more involved in the process. All of this helps them eat better and will give them healthier habits. These are group classes and cost less per person than my traditional cooking classes in someone's home, but there are usually more participants. I can repeat the same class at different locations, so once the class has been developed, I only need to print out menus and shop. I also have time before or after the class to take another client. It's been a great marketing vehicle for me since I am able to interact with a group of people and they then go home and tell their friends about it”, states Chef Tim.

What does he do in his spare time?

“Spare time? Between Soap Alchemy, Dinner Magician, the Little Chef's class I teach at the YMCA, the cutlery demos and the chapter, I don't often come across much of that, but I do like to read, listen to music and spend time with Jordan. Occasionally we'll go camping, but living out in the country, that seems a little redundant when we can just sit outside and start a big bonfire in the back yard”.

What he likes most to do as a Personal Chef

Chef Tim really enjoys doing interactive cooking parties and dinner parties. Unlike the core service where everything gets hidden away under the packaging, these are things that allow him to show off the food. He also enjoys teaching and demos and being able to interact with his clients.

How does he maintain?

Tim says that starting and maintaining a business, even if it's doing



something you love, is a lot of work and takes a lot of time. He encourages everyone to not beat themselves up if they make a mistake. That's how you learn! Don't let a fear of failure cause you to not put yourself out there and don't undervalue yourself. Set goals and list the ways to achieve them. Be realistic and don't expect to go from zero to sixty in a few weeks. While sixty may be the ultimate goal, set intermediate goals that will keep you moving along. If you don't quite get there the first time, or you hit a roadblock, reevaluate that goal and move on. Often the bumps in the road lead you to a better outcome, so don't beat yourself up over detours. Once you achieve your goal, set a new one and start working toward it.

Tim recommends that everyone do something every day to market their business, even if it only takes five minutes. That will help keep you motivated and keep you on track. Also, whether you are just starting out or have been in business for a while, don't forget to take time for you. Don't get so caught up in trying to do too many things at once – make sure you have time to recharge.

What future plans are in the works for Chef Tim?

“Even after two years, I'm still growing the business. I have never had any intention of stopping with Soap Alchemy, so for the time being, I plan on doing both. I would like to get to a point where I have a commercial kitchen where I can do cooking lessons and culinary team building events, but I don't ever want to lose the personal aspect of personal cheffing. I enjoy creating recipes and modifying them to fit what my clients want and I don't see that changing, but having a commercial space would mean I could offer more since I would be able to lower my food cost.”

“I do see myself working with more corporate clients on team building events. I have been getting a lot of interest in that area and it's very similar to an interactive party, which I really do enjoy doing”.



Chef Tim's Fav's

Favorite Cookbook?

“Fish: The Complete Guide to Buying and Cooking,” by Mark Bittman

Favorite Gadget

Microplane zester

Favorite Kitchen Tool/Equipment

FAGOR Multicooker.

Family/Pets and Hobbies

Tim lives with his long time partner Jordan Henderson on a farm. They own a variety of sheep and an ever-changing number of cats and kittens roam the farm. In addition to his parents, he has two brothers, a sister, three nieces, and three nephews. His nieces and one of his nephews has a total of nine children of their own. They are all spread out between Cleveland and Akron/Canton, Ohio. His hobbies include yoga, rock climbing, reading and writing. He loves to go camping and enjoys listening to music. “I do play simple things on the keyboards, but am by no means very good at it.”

USPCA Chapter

Chef Tim is the current President and founding member of the Western PA Chapter (West PA Chefs). He began to contact the PCs in Western PA shortly after he completed his CBA course in 2008. The chapter was approved by spring of 2009. “Having a chapter in the area has been a great resource for the chefs in the region”, Tim says. “We've gone to seminars together, had a variety of educational meetings and done several area food related trade shows together. We were named Chapter of the Year at the 2010 USPCA National Conference in Denver”.

Early in 2010, all the chapter members who were not yet certified took the CPC test and all passed.

The chapter has a blog that all the members are free to post to. This helps not only market the chapter and USPCA, but each member's own business by getting their names out in the community and the region. In June, half of the chapter members went to Washington, DC, to be a part of the launch of the “Chefs Move to Schools” program held on the South Lawn of the White House.



Tim's Favorite Recipes

Harvest Apple Salad



This recipe is perfect as a side or a quick and easy breakfast or snack. If you shred the apples in a food processor instead of cutting them into chunks, it's also good on whole wheat or multigrain bread as a sandwich.

Serving Size: 4

Ingredients:

2 each Apple -- Any Variety
3 tablespoons nonfat yogurt
10 each grapes -- cut in half
Cinnamon -- to taste

Wash and core the apples then chop them into 1/2 inch chunks. (Don't peel the apples) You may also shred the apples in a food processor instead of chopping them into chunks.

Mix the apples with the yogurt and grapes and add cinnamon to taste.

Serve as a side or serve on a whole wheat roll or bagel.

Variations:

Use raisins, dried cranberries, dried blueberries or dried cherries instead of grapes

Use vanilla or other fruit flavored yogurt instead of plain yogurt.

You may use any dried fruit you like. Dried cranberries work well.

Add a couple tablespoons chopped walnuts, peanuts or pecans.

Halibut Poached in Cider

Recipe By: Mark Bittman

Serving Size: 4

Ingredients

4 slices bacon
1 cup onion -- sliced
4 each granny Smith apple -- peeled, cored and sliced
2 cups apple cider
1/2 cup cider vinegar -- or sherry wine vinegar
salt and pepper -- freshly ground, to taste
1 1/2 pounds halibut steak -- in 4 equal pieces
1/4 cup fresh chives -- snipped

In a deep saute pan, cook the bacon over medium-high heat until crisp. Remove to drain on a paper towel.

Drain the pan of all but 3 tablespoons of fat. Add the onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until translucent, then add the apples and cook, stirring occasionally, about 5 more minutes; they should soften slightly but not begin to disintegrate.

Add the cider and let it bubble away for 1 to 2 minutes.

Add the vinegar, salt and pepper and cook one minute more.

Taste for acidity and seasoning; add more vinegar, salt and pepper as needed.

If preparing fresh serve: Rest the halibut on the onion mixture, lower the heat to medium-low and cover the pan. Cook gently, at a simmer, until the fish is done, 10 to 15 minutes. (use a thin bladed knife to peek between the layers of flesh; it should be opaque.) Crumble the bacon and sprinkle it, with the chives, over the fish. Serve immediately.

If preparing to freeze: Remove onion mixture from the heat and let it cool. Once cooled, divide mixture into 4 single serving containers or 4 food saver bags. Place one piece of fish over each portion of the onion mixture. Mark appropriately and freeze. Crumble bacon and portion into 4 separate baggies and keep with the fish. Depending on length of time to be stored, may not be able to use the fresh chives as garnish.

To heat: Thaw overnight in refrigerator.

If in separate containers to be baked, heat oven to 350 degrees and remove fish from refrigerator to warm up a bit while oven is heating. Once heated, remove foil and set aside. Remove plastic and discard and replace foil making sure to seal around all edges. Set aside bacon to garnish when heated. Place on cookie sheet and heat in oven for about 15 to 20 minutes or until done. Fish will separate between layers of flesh and be opaque. Remove fish and onion mixture to a plate and garnish with the bacon.

Recipe adapted from:

"Fish: The Complete Guide to Buying and Cooking" by Mark Bittman
"1994"

Cornmeal Crusted Chicken Nuggets

This is a fun recipe to make with kids.



Serving Size: 8

Ingredients:

1/2 cup flour
1 tablespoon Italian seasoning -- low calorie
1/2 cup water
3 large eggs -- lightly beaten
1 cup seasoned bread crumbs
1/2 cup yellow cornmeal -- coarse ground
1 teaspoon lemon zest
1 1/2 pounds boneless skinless chicken breast
Vegetable oil -- as needed (for frying)

Place the flour in a shallow dish. Whisk the Italian seasoning, water and eggs together in another shallow dish to blend. To a third shallow dish add the breadcrumbs, lemon zest and cornmeal. Stir to combine.

Trim any excess fat from the chicken. Place chicken between two sheets of plastic wrap and, using a meat mallet or small heavy skillet, pound the chicken so it is evenly about 1/4 to 1/3 inch thick. Cut the chicken into 1" to 1 1/2" chunks. Dip the chicken nuggets into flour; then into the egg mixture; then into the crumbs, covering the chicken completely. Place them on a baking sheet until ready to cook. They can be coated up to 4 hours ahead; cover and keep refrigerated. You may freeze them at this point by placing them on a parchment lined sheet pan then transferring to a zip top bag for storage when frozen.

To cook:

On stove top: Place about 1/4 inch of vegetable oil in the bottom of a sauté pan. Heat over medium heat if cooking fresh, medium low if cooking from frozen. Once oil hot, Gently fry the chicken nuggets in batches, turning once during cooking, until all are lightly browned and crisp and cooked through, about 5 minutes each batch if fresh, 7 to 10 if cooking from frozen. Transfer them to a platter and serve warm with bbq sauce, ketchup, marinara or ranch dressing.

In Oven: Bake in a single layer on a baking sheet at 400 degrees for about 12 to 15 minutes.

Braised chicken with mushrooms and pearl onions

Serving Size: 4

Ingredients:

1/4 cup all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
2 each chicken breast halves without skin -- bone in, about 3/4 pound total weight, each cut in half crosswise
2 each chicken thighs without skin -- bone-in
2 each chicken legs
1 1/2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
1 shallot -- chopped
1 pound mushrooms -- small, white button, brushed clean
1/2 pound pearl onions -- peeled
3/4 cup vegetable stock -- chicken stock or broth
1/2 cup dry red wine -- or port
2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
2 tablespoons chopped fresh thyme -- plus sprigs for garnish

In a shallow dish, stir together the flour, 1/2 teaspoon of the salt, and 1/4 teaspoon of the pepper. Dredge the chicken pieces in the seasoned flour.

In a large, heavy saucepan or Dutch oven, heat the oil over medium-high heat. Add the chicken and cook, turning once, until browned on both sides, about 5 minutes total. Transfer to a platter.

Add the shallot to the pan and saute until softened, about 1 minute. Add the mushrooms and saute until lightly browned, 3 to 4 minutes. Stir in the onions and saute until they begin to pick up some brown color, 2 to 3 minutes.

Stir in the stock and wine and deglaze the pan, stirring with a wooden spoon to scrape up any browned bits. Return the chicken pieces to the pan, and bring to a boil. Cover, reduce the heat to low, and simmer, stirring occasionally, until the chicken and vegetables are tender, 45 to 50 minutes. Stir in the vinegar, the chopped thyme, and the remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt and 1/4 teaspoon pepper.

Divide the vegetables among 4 single serve containers. Top each portion with 2 pieces of chicken, 1 light meat and 1 dark. Garnish with thyme sprigs. Cover with a layer of plastic wrap and then a layer of foil. Label and freeze.

Heating instructions: Thaw in refrigerator for 1 to 2 days. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Remove layer of foil and set aside, Remove plastic wrap and cover with the foil, being sure to seal around the edges. Place on a cookie sheet and heat in the oven for 20 to 25 minutes, or until chicken is heated through to 165 degrees in the thickest part of the meat.

