

in the kitchen with Tyler Brown

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MARCY BLACK SIMPSON



THE HERMITAGE HOTEL IN NASHVILLE, Tennessee, is a five-star and five-diamond hotel, so it has a reputation to uphold, especially with regard to its food. Executive chef Tyler Brown is at the helm of the hotel's kitchen, overseeing the service of three meals in the Capitol Grille restaurant, room service, and an employee cafeteria. Chef Brown draws upon his Southern heritage to create memorable meals for the guests. And although he spends most of his time at The Hermitage Hotel, he shared with us that he cherishes time with his family.



For more information about
The Hermitage Hotel, go to www.thehermitagehotel.com or call
1-888-888-8414.

- ▶ **Where's home?** South Carolina—Charleston and Greenville.
- ▶ **How did you learn to cook?** My mother went to cooking school in France. She cooked professionally for only a short time, but that's definitely where my introduction to cooking and passion for food came from—my mother and my grandmother.
- ▶ **Do you have any childhood memories of cooking?** I have more memories of traditions at different times of the year and different dishes Mom would make or things we would do together, like making Christmas cookies. I was interested in spending time with Mom instead of being real excited about cooking.
- ▶ **Since you have so much food you have to oversee at The Hermitage Hotel, do you ever cook at home?** I do, probably every other week. Not as much as my wife would like, but my wife does a great job cooking as well.
- ▶ **What is your favorite comfort food?** Barbecue chicken. I used to own a barbecue restaurant in Charlotte. I really love barbecue, and I want to eat it all the time.
- ▶ **What would a typical meal that you cook at home consist of?** Macaroni and cheese, collard greens, fried chicken or barbecued chicken—that's probably more typical of what I make. If I'm going to cook, those are the comfort foods I really love and highly enjoy eating and making. Shrimp and grits—I really enjoy making that.
- ▶ **What are your favorite ingredients to keep on hand?** Benton's bacon from Madisonville, Tennessee, vinegar—I really love vinegars in all different flavors—and artisanal cheeses.
- ▶ **What are some of your go-to herbs?** Chervil, tarragon, chives, flat-leaf parsley.
- ▶ **What about spices?** Cubeb peppercorns from Indonesia—they're very floral. And I love mulling spice, especially at this time of the year. But it's hard to beat salt and pepper to showcase Mother Nature.
- ▶ **Do you use a lot of butter?** Oh yeah, European butters. I am a butter connoisseur. We have one we put on our tables at the hotel that's from Vermont. Then there's a European one that we cook with on a regular basis. We get other ones that are seasoned with fleur de sel.
- ▶ **How would you describe the food at Capitol Grille?** Progressive, Southern regional. A real appreciation for the South and all things Southern is what we focus on. I try to recreate things from my childhood with a little twist on them. We really love the heritage, but we take into account the food trends around the country, too.
- ▶ **If you could share a meal with the person you most admire, who would that be?** My family—my wife, my mother, my father, my brother, my sister-in-law, my grandmother. That's where my heart is. None of this would be possible without the support of those folks. When it comes down to it, there's nobody else I'd rather share a meal with.
- ▶ **Do you get together regularly?** Christmas and four or five times a year. My folks live in Massachusetts now with my brother. And when we get together, it's based around food. It's just what we love to do, and we find common ground around it. Our comfort zone together is around the table.
- ▶ **Where did the recipe for these Lemon Snowdrop Cookies come from?** That recipe came from Debbie Doher, a friend of mine here in Nashville. She gave them to me a couple of years ago for Christmas. I called her before I submitted the recipe to make sure it was OK with her.
- ▶ **Have you ever used them at the hotel?** We use them seasonally. We'll use them for a "turndown" cookie, beside the guests' beds before they go to sleep. We also do lobby cookies, so we have a setup with hot mulled cider. And we utilize them for tea service. We do tea service Thursday through Sunday—like a proper English tea. We also use them in room service for milk and cookies that we offer for children.