

UPPER WESTCHESTER

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At Home with Chef Paul

THE PRIVATE CHEF REDEFINING
ENTERTAINING IN UPPER WESTCHESTER

ARTICLE BY DANA CIFONE

Paul Gileno



At Home Catering



DC: WHAT FIRST DREW YOU TO COOKING PROFESSIONALLY, AND HOW DID YOUR PATH EVENTUALLY LEAD YOU TO BECOMING A PRIVATE CHEF?

PG: I fell in love with cooking at a young age, starting out in catering halls in the Bronx before moving on to high-end restaurants in Manhattan. While those kitchens shaped my technique, I was always drawn back to catering, I loved customizing people's experiences, creating menus around their tastes, and personalizing their special days through food. That naturally led me into private cheffing, as many clients began asking if I would cook for them in their homes. It's just as fun as catering, if not more so, because I get to work with incredible clients and design meals around the season, their likes and dislikes, and the overall feeling they want to create.

DC: YOU'VE WORKED IN TRADITIONAL RESTAURANT KITCHENS, WHAT ULTIMATELY INSPIRED YOU TO MOVE INTO PRIVATE DINING?

PG: After a while, even in the finest restaurants where the menu is always evolving, the work began to feel repetitive to me. Moving into private dining and events gave me the freedom to be creative every day, to design menus around what people actually love and want to eat. What I value most is the personal connection: being part of a client's most meaningful moments, from birthdays and weddings to intimate celebrations, and creating something that truly reflects who they are and what they're looking for.

DC: WHAT HAS SURPRISED YOU MOST ABOUT COOKING IN PEOPLE'S HOMES VERSUS RESTAURANTS?

PG: I could make a whole laundry list, the spices people keep, the knives they use, but what surprised me most was the feeling of becoming part of the family. People are genuinely appreciative, and that's something many chefs and cooks in restaurants don't always get to experience. In private homes, you really see the satisfaction and happiness a good meal brings to someone's day, and that connection is incredibly meaningful.

DC: HOW DO YOU ADAPT YOUR COOKING STYLE TO DIFFERENT KITCHENS, LIFESTYLES, AND ENTERTAINING STYLES?

PG: That's absolutely true, you always have to be ready to pivot. When possible, I like to do a quick interview or even stop by someone's home beforehand just to get a feel for the space and their style. Other times, you have to adjust in the moment, read the room, and understand how they like to entertain. It can range from one end of the spectrum to the other, and being able to adapt and pivot is the most important quality you can have.

DC: YOU OFTEN COOK FOR INTIMATE CELEBRATIONS AND MILESTONES, WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE PART OF THOSE MOMENTS?

PG: It's always an honor. It means so much to me that they've chosen me to be part of such an intimate celebration, to feed them, take care of them, and allow them to fully enjoy their most special moments without any worries.

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DC: WHY DO YOU THINK MORE PEOPLE ARE CHOOSING TO ENTERTAIN AT HOME WITH A PRIVATE CHEF INSTEAD OF GOING OUT?

PG: I think it's a combination of many factors. People aren't going out late as much anymore, and at home they can be more comfortable, without worrying about driving, waiting for a table, inconsistent service, or feeling like just one of many guests in a crowded room. Entertaining at home is comfortable, safe, intimate, and personal. You get to control the atmosphere, the vibe, and the menu, and you don't have to shout across a busy restaurant to have a conversation.

DC: WHAT ARE UPPER WESTCHESTER FAMILIES LOOKING FOR MOST WHEN THEY HIRE YOU?

PG: Service, intimacy, privacy, quality and respect.

DC: WHERE DO YOU SEE YOUR WORK EVOLVING IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS?

PG: I see it evolving toward smaller, more intimate gatherings – more private dinners at home and more experience-based events that feel personal, meaningful, and far from ordinary.



DC: ONE INGREDIENT YOU ALWAYS HAVE IN YOUR KITCHEN?

PG: A really high-end olive oil and a block of Parmigiano Reggiano – they can solve a lot of problems in this world.



Summer Salad



Backyard Table