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Meet The Chef: Michael Williams of The Perennial Chef

A chef and a café passionate about providing local, organic food with delicately-balanced international flavors.

By Amy Baker | [Email the author](#) | April 12, 2011

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Chef Michael Williams is a long way from his childhood home of Seoul, South Korea, but he has absolutely no difficulty in translating our area's local and organic food into delicious French and Asian-inspired creations offered at his cafés, located in Bedford Hills and Ridgefield, CT, and catering establishment which serves clientele throughout Northern Westchester and Connecticut.

Chef Michael grew up tasting the Korean cooking talents of his grandmother and aunt but was also exposed to international foods when dining out in Seoul. His American father exposed him to Western foods through his own attempts in the family kitchen—which were not always successful but were generally “enthusiastic,” said Michael.

Education

Though pressured by his family to pursue an insurance career, Michael chose culinary arts instead and enrolled and attended the French Culinary Institute in New York City's Soho neighborhood. Apprenticeships at several top restaurants in New York City gave him the confidence to open his own place, he said.

The Perennial Chef Team

Chef Michael's sister, Leslie Williams, joined him in his quest to open The Perennial Chef in Bedford Hills back in 2006. Together they enlisted the collaboration of family friend Francoise Jarry, establishing their triumvirate partnership. Williams and Jarry had never before worked in the food industry, but Michael said they bring to the table a strong background of law, business and love of good food.

Williams, a lawyer, is responsible for food and gift purchases at the establishment; she also provides home-grown organic produce to be used and sold at The Perennial Chef. As of late, Williams can also be found with her arms, elbow-deep in soy beans, preparing their own delicately-sweet, wonderfully-fresh homemade tofu. This is nothing like the tofu found packaged in plastic located in the refrigerated section of the supermarket, just as a hot, flaky, buttery Parisian croissant cannot be compared a Pillsbury Crescent Roll.

And speaking of "Parisian," native Frenchwoman Jarry attended international business school HEC Paris and provides that expertise to the Perennial Chef, in addition to being the point person for their catering business.

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The Food

The Perennial Chef is known for simply-seasoned delectable fare, such as their Pan-Seared Organic Salmon with Sesame & Miso or Homemade Quiche served with Organic Sorrel and Rainbeau Ridge Fresh Goat Cheese, available for take-out or catering, or to be consumed surrounded by the French country décor of one of their quaint cafés. Though the restaurant is known for its quality, many may not realize that Chef Michael and his partners are also passionately dedicated to using local, seasonal and organic foods in creating their menu items.

The Interview

Patch: Describe your style of cooking.

Chef Michael: Technical and analytical since I am a type A personality. My style is eclectic because I love all kinds of food but I always seek a balance.

Patch: Do you have a favorite *uncommon* ingredient?

Chef Michael: Smoked Himalyan pink salt which I smoke myself and add to the grilled all-natural, hormone-free beef and chicken on our menu.

Patch: What would be your requested "last meal"?

Chef Michael: I want a simple, elegant cream soup. For example, a veloute soup tempered with egg yolks, with spaetzle dumplings.

Patch: What's the most unusual request you've received from a diner?

Chef Michael: Precisely 43 grams of peas for a diner on some popular diet.

Patch: When not cooking, what activity tickles your fancy?

Chef Michael: Cycling and spending time with my dogs.

Patch: What's your idea of a perfect night out?

Chef Michael: A fine meal accompanied by exceptional service, which in it's discretion isn't even noticed.

Patch: What current food trend turns you off?

Chef Michael: The uninformed use of foam - foaming meat in particular - and liquid nitrogen by every Tom, Dick and Harry.

Patch: Is there any food item in the world you would refuse to eat?

Chef Michael: I would never eat whale, dolphin, shark fin, etc. There are plenty of other things to eat in this world.

Patch: Where do you like to dine locally?

Chef Michael: For special occasions, I like to go to Blue Hill at Stone Barn.

You can find Passover and Easter menus for The Perennial Chef on their [website](#). And check out their [blog](#) to get tips on entertaining, natural food cures, as well as many other interesting entries.

The Perennial Chef

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