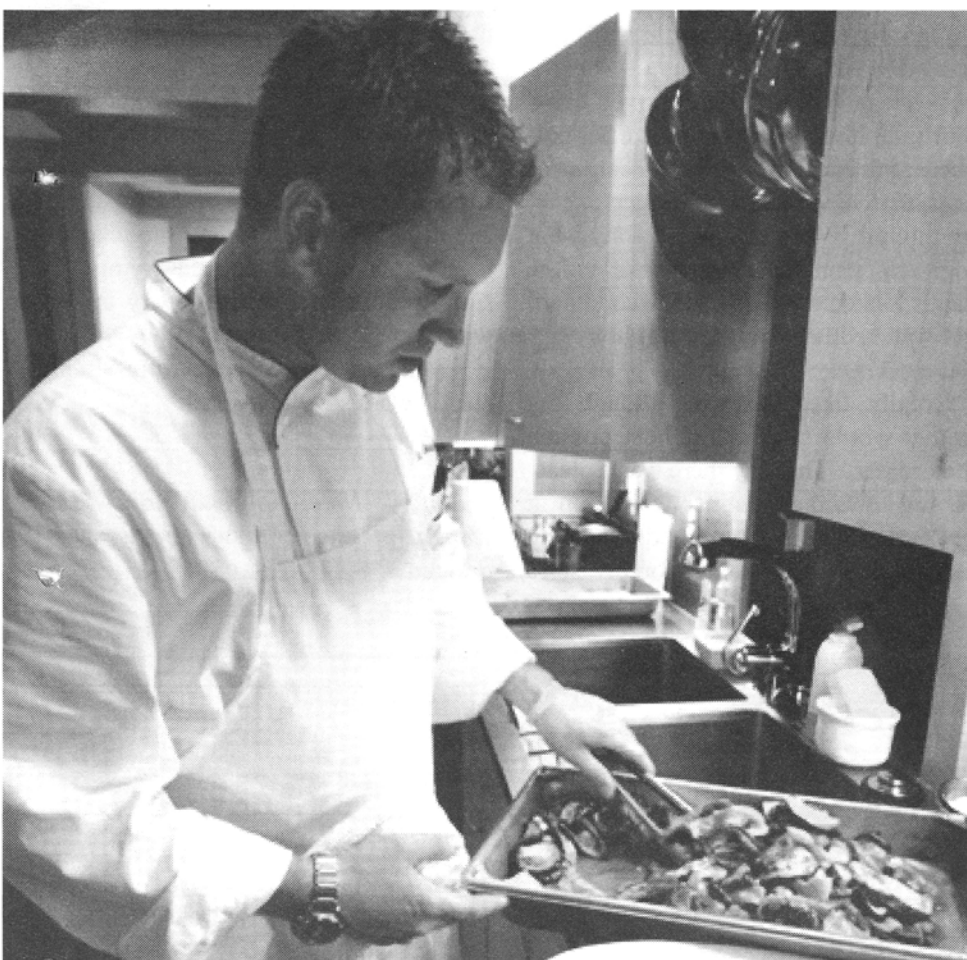


ART AND COMMUNITY

Local chef fills dining void



Romona Robbins

Chef Phillip McDonald prepares an entrée at the home of Robert and Daryl Davis. McDonald specializes in 5-star dining in the comfort of your own surroundings.

By Madra McDonald
Contributing Writer

Table Five is a Personal Chef Service created by Chef Phillip McDonald that specializes in dinner parties and special home events along the Emerald Coast. Aptly named for all the five senses, Table Five services events ranging from an intimate dinner for two to elaborate dinner parties for 20 as well as in-home cooking classes for the aspiring gourmet cook.

"People love to entertain friends and family at home but most people dread the stress involved with planning and executing an event, especially the cooking aspect," said Phillip McDonald, owner/chef of Table Five. "With Table Five, clients can have a professionally trained chef prepare a custom menu tailored to their personal tastes and dietary requirements in the comfort and privacy of their own home."

The Table Five service includes: a personal consultation, customized menu, wine pairing, grocery shopping, travel, food preparation, cooking, serving, and kitchen clean-up.

A professionally trained chef in some of the area's best restaurants, McDonald

established Table Five in October 2006 after recognizing his desire to bring this unique dining experience into people's homes.

"I think personal chefs fill a niche in our market today as a result of the lack of time people have in their lives and the desire to eat great food. The personal chef experience is a lot like having a private chef for hire," said McDonald.

With each dining event, McDonald creates menus tailored to each client's palette and preference and looks to each individual experience as a challenge to create something exceptional.

"Table Five allows me the creative freedom to change the menu on a regular basis," said McDonald. "I always try to utilize local farmers and vendors to get the best seasonal produce and products available. The idea is to create menus based on what is in season."

With a love for Italian cuisine and handmade dishes, McDonald believes food is at its best when kept simple, using only top quality ingredients and seasonal produce. Table Five offers a diverse selection of cuisines such as Italian, Spanish, Middle Eastern, Low Country, and Southwestern.

A Destin native, McDonald's seven years in the culinary industry were honed at various area restaurants including: Cuvee Beach, Criolla's, Fish Out of Water, Bogwalk, and Onano in Rosemary Beach. Over the years, McDonald has had the privilege of working under several talented chefs in the area from Europe who taught him great respect for ingredients and proper cooking technique.

During his tenure as Chef de Cuisine

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at Onano, McDonald's understated approach to food garnered attention from several members of the media including: The New York Times, Travel & Leisure and PBS, to name a few.

In addition to above accolades, McDonald has received rave reviews from local residents and the following has been said about the Table Five experience:

"I have hired Chef Phillip with Table Five for both business and pleasure and have been thrilled with the experiences. I have been a big fan of Chef Phillip for a long time and this new venture for him is awesome. His culinary talents and professionalism continue to amaze me. Table Five is truly a culinary delight," said Lisa Burwell, President of Cornerstone Marketing & Advertising and Seagrove resident.

"In my travels over the last year, I have definitely noticed that personal chefs are all the

rage on just about every corner of the earth. It's a new concept that has really taken off and Chef Phillip is making us proud as the Emerald Coast's ambassador to this new intimate dining experience," said Shane Reynolds, Host/Producer for Travel Channel's "Not Your Average Travel Guide."

"Chef Phillip and I have created several events together and I was very pleased with each venue, especially when my guests raved. I have become a tremendous fan of Chef Phillip's talents. He has an understated ability to discover just what a client is expecting or imagining and does so in the most professional way. He has truly won Robert and me over," said Daryl Davis, co-

founder of Seaside, Florida.

Since its inception, Table Five has catered events in Seagrove Beach, Rosemary Beach, Seaside, WaterSound, Sandestin, Destin, and Choctaw Beach.

Upon learning of the growing personal chef industry and recognizing a niche in the marketplace, McDonald was inspired to create Table Five after traveling to California and Italy in 2006 on culinary expeditions.

In January of 2006, McDonald spent time exploring the San Francisco restaurant scene and visiting with various wine makers in Napa, Sonoma, Windsor, and Monterey including Martinelli, Hendry and Elyse. The highlight of his trip included the ultimate culinary destination for chefs and foodies alike: dining at The French Laundry, Chef Thomas Keller's renowned restaurant located in Yountville, California.

In September 2006, after a brief six month stint opening a new wine bar in the area, McDonald learned invaluable information pairing wines with food and the vast world of gourmet cheeses. He then spent an inspiring two weeks traveling throughout Italy and the region of Tuscany visiting Rome, Siena, Florence, and Montalcino.

"When I look back at 2006, I realize that much of the year was spent on research development for creating what would eventually become Table Five. I have a great passion for food and wine and wanted to share this enthusiasm on a more personal level," said McDonald.