



April 24, 2018

## CHEF ALYSSA

**Kohlrabi, Spanish Octopus And A Chef Named Alyssa**



She's savvy, creative, artistic, smart and filled with joy. She's the perfect description of what an ideal entrepreneur should think like, act like, and even look like. Her eyes sparkle with life, and the challenge of a new venture spills out of her every breath. She's Chef Alyssa and she's fantastic!

Speaking to a full house of business men and women at Charlotte Rotary Club, Chef Alyssa captivated us with her saga of growing up in our city; becoming fascinated with painting, dance and photography as a child and subsequently attending Northwest School of the Arts; embracing all things relating to hospitality and cooking as a teenager; acing her grades in culinary at the Art Institute of Charlotte and becoming intrigued by the very thought of a career as a chef; ultimately achieving her dream of becoming Executive Chef of a restaurant; finding hidden magic in what SouthEnd has to offer; and happily adding to that goal ... teaching what she knows and loves. Chef Alyssa is the real deal.

Beginning her professional career by working for both Chef Paul Verica (The Club at Longview) and Chef Marc Jacksina (Halycon) gave the talented young chef-in-the-making the skill-level and experience she wanted and needed. She soaked up what they taught her and what she absorbed in their kitchens and then opened her own catering business specializing in gourmet foods, at first primarily for the Jewish community. This is where Chef Alyssa learned lessons not available simply by reading books or attending classes. Subsequently, being named Executive Chef at FERN ~ a vegetarian restaurant on East Boulevard featuring vegan cuisine ~ gave her a kick-start and a passion for owning her own restaurant featuring healthy foods and an enjoyable pristine environment.

Enter Andrew Wilen, her boyfriend with a dream of his own. We should, he wisely suggested/recommended/pushed-for, hold cooking classes and share what we know and love best. Chef Alyssa hesitantly-then-wholeheartedly jumped onboard. There was a demand; there was a gap that no one else was filling; there was an audience to be corralled. The learning tool was simply that food doesn't magically arrive on a plate in a restaurant or at the dinner table at home. It was time for Chef Alyssa and her then-boyfriend/now-husband, Andrew, to open a business that would teach cooking and would ultimately become *Chef Alyssa's Kitchen*.

The business grew from a few cooking classes per month to overwhelmingly sold-out classes with long waiting lists. Those classes range from date night events ~ to couples' or girls' nights out ~ to corporate groups. Gift cards for classes are the latest "must have." Social media has pushed the business into high gear and between Facebook, Instagram, and other online postings plus cooking demos and off-site events, Chef

Alyssa's Kitchen - and it's tired but proud owners - have become a "must see/must do" experience. Holiday gatherings, along with annual corporate team-building events, and private classes are on everyone's bucket list. Students of Chef Alyssa's Kitchen are now fans of fennel and kohlrabi and oddities like Spanish Octopus, making cooking for family and guests something fun and quite spectacular.

As the business took off, Chef Alyssa's Kitchen moved from a tiny space at South End's Atherton Market to a bigger, then an *even-bigger* space ~ almost ready to open ~ in Lower SouthEnd at Bowers Development just down from Olde Mecklenburg Brewery and Queen Park Social. Chef Alyssa's condiment lines featuring exquisite-tasting Smoked-Chili Rosemary Mustard and Champagne-Tomato Jam are on the market. There's a line of sandwich spreads and dips. Another 100 classes will be added to the 205+ class roster very soon. A program for kids called Kids Culinary Camps inviting kids seven years of age or older to attend introduces them to healthy, locally-grown foods and how much fun it can be to create new dishes. Soon there will be weekend birthday parties and prepared take-out dinners for the general public. Bland food is not on the agenda --- ethnic foods, Spanish and Mediterranean or Moroccan flavors will appeal to everyone. And all prepared, cooked and taught by Chef Alyssa and her staff with an emphasis on health and FUN.

Welcome to the world of entrepreneurship, Chef Alyssa. You've set the standard and you've carved the path. The kudos keep rolling in. You've competed on Food Network's "Beat Bobby Flay" and you've been named one of the Top 50 Most Influential Women in Charlotte by The Mecklenburg Times. You're amazing. You're unique. And you're a true native Charlotte treasure. We're proud to call you our own.

***The award-winning combo of Chef Alyssa and her husband, Andrew, may be reached via [www.chefalyssaskitchen.com](http://www.chefalyssaskitchen.com) or follow @chefalyssact.***

*Speaker Write-Up:* Marilynn Bowler; *Head Table:* Larry Hyatt, Katie Tyler, Wes Jones, Clyde Robinson, Andrew Wilen; *Invocation:* Hank Donaghy; *Visitors & Guests:* Ken Poe; *Photos:* Bert Voswinkel

## CLUB NEWS



This is Kuba, the club's 2018-2019 exchange student that arrives from Poland in August. Kuba will attend Myers Park High School, enjoys outdoor activities and is looking forward to exploring Charlotte.

An immediate need is to identify a family that can host Kuba from August – November. If you are in the Myers Park district or know of a neighbor that may be interested in hosting (this time frame or any other time frame), please contact Bill Loftin, [bill@loftinco.com](mailto:bill@loftinco.com). Everyone should be thinking of an activity or something that could be done to support Kuba during his time in the USA.

Members of this club become family in pretty short order and it's nice to support each other. Thankful for **Jan & Ron Kimble** and the fantastic program presented last week at the Jamie Kimble Foundation for Courage Luncheon; **Terri DeBoo** for her tireless work with this event; **Lee Tabor** for taking care of **John** who had knee replacement surgery; all that attended **Tom Robertson's** funeral over the weekend; and **Leland Park**, who was spotted on an outing for ice cream last week.

**Michael Orzech** is laying the groundwork for the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Rotary Scholarship Golf Classic that will be held October 2, 2018 at the Ballantyne Resort. Your ideas and support are needed to make this year's tournament another stellar event. Contact Michael at [michael@promotionmagic.com](mailto:michael@promotionmagic.com).

### **ROTARY 101**

There is so much to learn about Rotary and Rotary 101 will attempt to offer additional information on how things are done. Today is about the membership process. You've brought a guest to a few meetings, they like what they saw and want to join the club. The membership application is not on the website because membership into Rotary is by invitation only (*email Rotary office for a copy*). You will sign the application as the sponsor and two other members will sign/endorse (*they met your friend and agree they would make a good member*). Return the paperwork to the Rotary office. The name, company, sponsors will be posted in the Reporter for one week (*this gives the membership a week for comment/questions*). The paperwork will be emailed to the Board and final approval is voted on in the monthly board meeting. ANYONE in the club can propose a member and it doesn't matter if you've been in the club a week or years. This has been an unusual year for resignations due to relocation, retirement, travel or health issues. It's always a good day when a new person can be introduced to ROTARY.

**DISTRICT CONFERENCE:** Rotary Districts 7680 and 7750 are teaming up to host a joint conference May 18-20, 2018 in Charleston. The conference will be held at the Charleston Convention Center with hotel accommodations at Embassy Suites by Hilton. Scheduled to speak: Immediate Past RI President John Germ and RI Director-Elect David Stovall will talk about how Rotary is making a difference throughout the world. SC Attorney General Alan Wilson will speak about human trafficking. And, business consultant Peter Chatel will talk about leadership. 202 Rotarians have already signed up to attend. Conference registration is \$150; hotel is \$170 per night and sign up is available on the database (DACdb.com). This conference is open to everyone.

### **MEMBERSHIP**

07/01/2017	309
04/24/2018	290
Net Increase:	-19

New Members: Brian Carn, Christy Majors, Suzie Ford, Todd Ford

Resignations: Steve Byrum, Susan Evans, Tom Robertson (deceased), Louis Watts, Laura Thomas

Visitors	7
Club Members	116
Total	123 (47%)

Visitors & Guests: Shelley Thompkins, Shannon Hames, Linwood Bolles, Adam Eberhart, Frank Mueller

### **UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS (05/03/18 – 05/09/18)**

05/03 Kevin Caldwell

05/07 Mary Rinehart

05/08 John Luebke

05/09 Fernando Ycaza

### **UPCOMING ANNIVERSARIES (05/03/18 – 05/09/18)**

05/04 Ridgely & John Phillips, Holli & Keith Nowokunski

05/05 Kelly & Mike Crum

05/06 Katherine Pierce & Mike Hawley

05/07 Julie Haack & David Murray

05/08 Burgl & Ronnie Pruett, Katheryn & Kyle Woodruff

### **ROTARY ANNIVERSARIES (05/03/18 – 05/09/18)**

01 year – Jonathan Schulz

03 years – Mike Restaino

09 years – Bill Bartee

### **UPCOMING PROGRAMS**

05/01 Dr. Clayton Wilcox, Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools

05/08 Tai Jaiyeoba, City of Charlotte Planning Director

05/15 Sean Garrett, Executive Director, United Way Central Carolin

05/22 Sherry Chisenhall, Editor, Charlotte Observer

05/29 Interact Service Award

Photos from our luncheons and other events can be found on **Flickr** [Click here](#)



**Rotary**  
Club of  
Charlotte



[charlotterotary.org](http://charlotterotary.org) 704.375.6816

1850 East 3<sup>rd</sup> Street | Suite 220 | Charlotte, NC 28204 USA

Rotary Club of Charlotte