



Community Spot-Lite

Steve The Southern Gourmet Restaurant & Catering

Where Great Food Brings Great People Together

by Val Jones

The décor is warm and inviting. The food is delicious beyond belief. The atmosphere is as pleasant as eating at your own grandmother's diner table. Welcome to **Steve The Southern Gourmet Restaurant & Catering** on Grove Street, near the corner of Grove and Ramsey, where the old Mrs. Winner's Restaurant used to be.

The owner, chef **Steve Graham**, greets me and asks, "Have you eaten here before?" "No, I haven't." "Well, I insist anyone who writes about me eats my food first. So, order something... on me and then tell me what you REALLY think." Hmmm... "Shrimp and Grits, please," I replied. "Can I get it with no pork?" "No problem," he says. "We have turkey products." Impressive. I like this restaurant already.

Minutes later, I am presented with the most exquisite-looking dish. The eggs, perfectly cooked. The shrimp delectably placed in a turkey-based gravy sauce that makes you want to dive right in. The fried grits cake is uniquely molded to perfection in the shape of a rice cake. And the entire meal is beckoning me to feast heartily. And once I taste it. Oh yes...it's ON now! Did I say I like this restaurant? Correction: I LOVE IT!

Steve The Southern Gourmet Restaurant & Catering celebrated its first year in business on September 19, 2010. Chef Steve Graham has already been recognized by his peers and compared to some of the top restaurants in the area.

Starting out with basic Southern dishes, Steve mastered other dishes from different parts of the country and world. "I learned how to cook classic Italian dishes because I love Italian food. In fact, people have compared my Italian dishes to the top Italian restaurant here. So, I'm honored."

Speaking of honored, Steve Graham recently won an award for Best Entrees at the Charity Signature Chefs' Auction at the Holiday Inn Bordeaux this year. His accolades continue to grow as well as his customers. But it is more than just the great food. It's the entire cozy atmosphere as you notice the walls lined with pictures scanning the generations in Steve's family. Even the walls are painted the same color of his grandmother's living room.

"I purposely strive to give my restaurant that type of feeling," says Steve. "I do 90% of the cooking. So when I can get off the grill, I try to greet all my customers as much as possible. I even know most of my regulars by name."

Country cooking and courtesy is in the blood of this Acme-Delco (Columbus Co.) native and graduate of Fayetteville State University. This All-American football player with a degree in biology soon began working for Tyson Foods upon graduation. It was as a Quality Control Supervisor in the laboratory at Tyson where Steve decided to start his own catering busi-



Steve Graham (910) 321-1631 (Photo by JJ Jones)

ness 7 years ago. "I enjoyed my job. But I love cooking," he says. "My catering kept growing and life changes pushed me into my passion. It came down to making a life decision of whether I was going to continue to work for Tyson or start doing the restaurant and having something to leave for my children. So, I took a leap of faith to own my own business."

It helps when you have a support system of great friends who can share your passion. Steve is aided by his fellow Bronco and Assistant Manager, Mike Broadhurst from Mount Olive, NC (near Goldsboro). Mike, with his own business called 'Big B's Barbecue,' works in conjunction with the restaurant and does the smoking of the Turkeys as well as the barbecuing. "He's the first one to introduce me to turkey barbecue," says Steve. "Even though it's big where Mike is from, I'm probably the only one who serves it in this area. Its popularity is growing fast."

Yanci Evans also operates her own business - 'Fancy Yanci's Dessert Corner' - in cooperation with the restaurant. All the desserts - a combination of Steve's and Yanci's best recipes - are homemade and absolutely to die for! Certain desserts are specialties depending on what is in season - like their Blueberry Crunch pie and peach cobbler. Their basic menu is always a deli-

cious and eye-appetizing winner with homemade bread pudding, lemon cake, Hershey Bar cake made with real Hershey bars, pumpkin squares and more.

Included in this mix are Steve's 3 beautiful young daughters. Zoia, Zakira and Frankie help in waitressing, washing dishes, sweeping and mopping floors. Steve laughs at how he has taught his daughters how to stir pots like his grandmother taught him.

The restaurant shuts down shortly around 3 or 4pm on most days so Steve can spend quality time with his children, as well as prepare for his catering jobs. "You only get one time to raise children right," says Steve. "So I want to be there for them, taking them to the park, going to the movies or playing basketball with them and making sure they spend quality time with their daddy."

He also remarks: "Since we also cater and sometimes have jobs for three or four hundred people, it is impossible to close at ten o'clock at night and get that type of job prepared. So, for most of our catering jobs, we do our preliminary prep work at night. Then, all we have to do is throw it in the oven and cook it the next day. I do the bulk of the catering jobs myself because it's off site. And if there's a problem, you have to make a quick decision and be able to alter this or that. So, I'd rather be on site to handle the quick decisions and make sure everything runs smoothly."

When it comes to the menu, Steve The Southern Gourmet has a plethora of tastes for your palate - from their signature shrimp, grits and eggs to fried chicken to stewed beef to Southern Style, Cajun or Italian. Always looking to creating new dishes, Steve says, "I've noticed people don't eat out as much when it's hot. So I've decided come late Spring, I'm going to create a Summer menu where people can still enjoy the experience of eating out but with lighter great-tasting meals."

For those who are interested in learning how to improve their culinary skills, Steve Graham along with fellow chef Karrell Darden have created "Fork and Spoon Night," a special cooking class that combines culinary demonstrations with social interaction. This event, where the chefs show guests how to prepare a four-course meal and will then serve the food to them, takes place every fourth Saturday of the month. This is just another example of how Steve The Southern Gourmet Restaurant & Catering lives up to its motto: "Where Great Food Brings Great People Together."

Steve The Southern Gourmet Restaurant & Catering is located near the intersection of Grove and Ramsey at 117 Grove Street, Fayetteville, NC 28301. Hours of operation are: Monday-Thursday 6 til 3, Friday 6 til 7, Saturday 7 til 4 and Sunday 7 to 7. To call ahead your order or find out more about "Fork and Spoon Night," call 910-321-1631. For catering, call 910-261-3833.

Ernesto J.F. Graham, M.D., P.A.

Obstetrics & Gynecology

1521 Owen Park Lane, Fayetteville • Beside 316 Oyster Restaurant



- Prenatal Care
- Ultrasound
- General Gynecology
- Breast & Cervical Cancer Screening
- Outpatient Laparoscopic Hysterectomy
- Office Ablation (For Bleeding)
- Office Essure Tubal Ligation

Accepting New Patients



Office Manager

Consultations By Appointment

(910) 223-7420

Tricare & Most Insurance Plans Accepted



Se Habla Español

