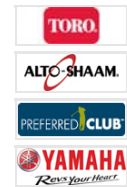




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### First-Hand Looks

By Joanna DeChellis | June 3rd, 2014

Greensboro (N.C.) CC got members in the kitchen with “Chef for a Day,” a cooking competition that yielded unexpected benefits.

Greensboro (N.C.) Country Club (GCC) plays host to dozens of member events. Some are food-oriented. Some aren’t. But the club’s latest culinary-focused concept yielded some interesting results.

“Over a cold beer one day, [Executive Chef Scott Harmon] and I were talking about the obstacles we face improving food production and the overall vision of F&B,” says Steve Matlaga, CCM, who became the club’s new General Manager/COO at the end of 2012.

“The common hurdle for a la carte and banquet production—and creativity—has been the age, type and location of equipment in the kitchen.”

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*When members of Greensboro CC participated in the “Chef for a Day” event, they gained new appreciation for, and became advocates of, optimum kitchen conditions.*



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**The Goal:** Host a cook-off for nearly 70 members of Greensboro CC, with participant chef teams made up of club members.



Greensboro CC's “Chef for a Day”

**The Plan:** Each two-member team was paired with one of the club’s sous chefs. Proteins were randomly assigned to each team (so there weren’t any overlapping dishes) and with the Executive Chef’s oversight, the sous chefs worked with their teams to create a custom,

That conversation ended with a mutual goal to reallocate part of the club’s capital budget for new equipment purchases.

Around the same time, Harmon participated in a local culinary competition, where he had to battle it out with other area chefs in a side-by-side, single-elimination cook-off. His dishes, along with those of his competitors, were served in a blind-dinner format. (Three courses from each chef were served without guests knowing whose food they were tasting.) Guests were asked to choose their favorites and the winner took home the grand prize.

From this experience Harmon took home an idea for a new event at his club—and one that might help speed the momentum toward that new kitchen equipment as well.

Dubbed “Chef for a Day,” GCC’s spin on the competition featured three two-member teams

five-course menu. On the day of the event, the member teams (along with their sous chefs) worked the line preparing the dishes for more than 70 member-attendees, who were then invited to vote for their favorite dishes. The winners took home gift cards (as well as notoriety) and all participating member-chefs were invited to a dedicated chef's table event hosted by the club.

**The Payoff:** After experiencing first-hand the challenges the club faces with space and equipment in the back of the house, the member-chefs have become ambassadors of change for the kitchen.

blessing in disguise.

"The air-conditioning died," says Harmon. "We had to bring in portable AC units, but it was still over 90 degrees in the kitchen. When you paired that with the other layout and equipment challenges, it gave the member-chefs—who were absolute troopers—some real-life insight into the conditions in the back of the house."

As a result, the "Chefs for a Day" became the biggest proponents of permanent change for the club's kitchen, and helped bring about needed equipment purchases and kitchen upgrades. The GCC Board also now sees the back of the house as a viable option for expansion and renovation.

"Bringing the members into the back of the house allowed them to see first-hand what we're dealing with daily," says Harmon. "It gave them a new appreciation for how hard we work to present a flawless experience day in and day out. Those members—a few of whom are also Board members—are now fans forever of the culinary team. We couldn't ask for more support."

GCC plans to turn "Chef for a Day" into an annual event, as 71 members attended the tasting. "We planned for no more than 75," says Rachel Payne Morrow, the club's Director of Membership & Marketing Development. "And everyone had a really wonderful time supporting and encouraging one another. We might make some changes to the rules going forward—like the same team can't participate in back-to-back years—but the general bones of the event will stay the same."

"Because it was a new event, we underpriced it, hoping to drive participation," adds Matlaga about the \$40-per-person price tag. "But the ROI in kitchen upgrades and support for change made this event a huge success for the club and the kitchen staff."

(each mentored by one of GCC's sous chefs) who were asked to create a five-course menu with a randomly assigned protein. Harmon oversaw all operations to ensure there was no overlap in dishes or menus.

"We let the members be the menu drivers," says Harmon. "They came up with some really great ideas, too."

On the day of the event, the member teams were asked to arrive at the club in the morning to start prep. They worked all day as the dishes were prepared and executed.

What happened next proved to be the ultimate



Greensboro CC's "Chef for a Day"



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Greensboro CC's "Chef for a Day"



Greensboro CC's "Chef for a Day"



Greensboro CC's "Chef for a Day"



When members of Greensboro CC participated in the "Chef for a Day" event, they gained new appreciation for, and became advocates of, optimum kitchen conditions.

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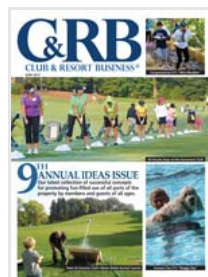
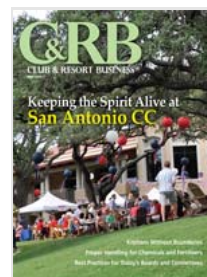
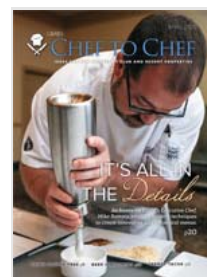
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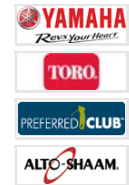
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