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TIME OUT!



ANDREW HARNIK/EXAMINER

Chris Ford is the pastry chef at Trummer's on Main in Clifton, Va., where his youth energizes the desserts he creates.

All paths lead to sweet success

Pastry chef's love of baking started early

By Alexandra Greeley
Special to the Washington Examiner

Googling the name Chris Ford turns up some interesting options, from basketball player to television personality, and even funky musician.

But this Chris Ford, a Florida native now living and working in Virginia, is the young, engaging pastry chef at Trummer's on Main restaurant in Clifton, Va. And he said he's happy about his new Virginia home, with its changing seasons and selection of alluring area restaurants.

A further Google search turns up how often since his arrival this 24-year-old has appeared at charity events with his array of pastries. Youth has its dividends, otherwise baking bread, plating desserts and whipping up ice creams for the restaurant would not leave such energy for his prolific kitchen and baking life. But, he noted, "I am determined, and I work hard."

Even since childhood, Ford has been determined: After all, he started baking bread with his grandmother when he was only 6 years old, and ended up making family dinners to help out his busy mother. But his first passion has always been baking and dessert making.

"Baking is the first thing I've done," he said. "I feel I can be more creative with it than with regular savory cooking."

After high school, Ford enrolled in the Le Cordon Bleu Program at the Orlando Culinary Academy, earning his culinary degree in 2005. While in school, he externed with famous

Which is your favorite cuisine?

French bistro, because it is so classic and simple. It is always so good and hits the spot.

What is your favorite dessert?

A chocolate chip cookie. As simple as that.

Which is your favorite restaurant?

Proof. I've been three times.

They have great cheese.

What's in your fridge?

Homemade chili, sparkling red wine, tons of seltzer water and stuff to make tacos. Leftovers I should throw out.

What's your comfort food?

Cheeseburger, fries and ranch dressing

Florida chef Norman Van Aken at the Ritz-Carlton, where, coincidentally, he worked under Clayton Miller, Trummer's present executive chef. After another two years working with Miller, Ford headed to New York City to live and work in Manhattan.

"I wanted to live in New York as an adult," he said, "and to work there as a pastry chef. ChikaLicious Dessert Bar hired me as a pastry sous chef, where I worked for two years. That fulfilled my dreams."

Back to Google: An avant-garde dessert destination, ChikaLicious must have proved an interesting training ground for Ford, who says his personal dessert style trends toward the traditional.

"The dessert menu here is my baby," he said, "and it shows how I am as a chef. My food goes for nostalgic but also refined. I want what I create to look and feel different, but I want people to think, 'Mom's apple pie.'"

For Valentine's Day, for example, Ford assembled orange sherbet flavored with lavender and grapefruit and garnished with Fruit Loops. And when strawberry season arrives, Ford will offer patrons his version of strawberry shortcake: a

IF YOU GO Trummer's on Main

» Where: 7134 Main St., Clifton

» Info: 703-266-1623

» Hours: 5 to 10 p.m. Tuesday to Saturday; Sunday brunch 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Read Ford's blog, all about pastry dreams and all good things from the kitchen and life itself, at butterloveandhardwork.typepad.com/butterlovehardwork

terrine of strawberries in a gelatin tube with sherbet and pound cake streusel.

"I let the food speak to me," he said. "I won't cover up [natural] flavors with unnecessary sugar or other ingredients. With sugar, a little can be too much, way too much."

Now that Ford is a full-fledged pastry chef, what do his mother and grandmother think of his career choice?

"They are my biggest fans," he said. "My mom and grandmother have been here several times. They are very proud to see that I am still doing what I love."