

Lane Tabbatt: The Secret Ingredient to the Food on Your Plate

When a waiter brings out a plate at the restaurant people often look at the food on the plate, but what they don't always see is the passion behind each delicacy. Embedded within the roast chicken, mashed potatoes, and green beans lies one person's dream. Lane Tabbatt, a chef of thirty years who now cooks for High Altitude Research Station and multiple sororities on campus with Campus Cooks, provides the passion to the plate.

"My greatest joy in cooking is to make people happy with my food, if it's making meatloaf, mashed potatoes and gravy then it will be the best meatloaf mashed potatoes and gravy you ever had," Tabbatt said.

His passion started two generations earlier with his grandmother, who inspired him to start following and creating recipes. At the young age of fifteen, Tabbatt began cooking dinners every night because his mother's cooking didn't always satisfy his needs.

After he graduated high school, Tabbatt enlisted in the army in 1982 as a chef. After three years cooking in the field on a mobile kitchen trailer, the army compensated him with \$15,000 to continue his dream.

After the army, he enrolled in one of the most prestigious culinary schools in America, The Culinary Institute of America in New York City. This school challenged Tabbatt in new ways. Over 21 months he formed a small group within the institute that became his family, a family that was only as strong as its weakest link. Tabbatt remembers a specific instance when one member of his group brought back green leaks instead of green onions and the head chef immediately let him go. Tabbatt realized quickly that professional cooking was a cutthroat job, a job not for the weak hearted.

Tabbatt held a position on student council at the Culinary Institute of America, and through that position met Julia Childs in 1992. He sat in on a cooking demo with her as an assistant, and said that her charisma on TV was the same in person. When Tabbatt asked Childs how she felt about the new health food restaurant opening up on campus, she replied, "it's a good idea but I'm gonna die eating fats, creams, and butters for the rest of my life."

Throughout his career Tabbatt cooked for multiple celebrities, including Goldie Hahn and Steve Perry, the lead singer of Journey. Tabbatt remembers that Perry would always order a side caesar salad with everything no matter what. To thank him for his cooking, Perry would often give Tabbatt free tickets to his concert, which helped fuel the secret music junkie inside of him.

Tabbatt traveled all around the nation but eventually settled down in Boulder because of his love for the outdoors, hiking, camping, and fishing. Tabbatt currently works for campus cooks on the CU Boulder campus, cooking food for Chi Omega, Delta Gamma, and Gamma Phi Beta.

Robert Sanson, one of Tabbatt's coworkers at Campus Cooks says that while cooking food for hundreds of girls sounds like a dream job to some chefs, getting the ladies to communicate what they want presents a dilemma. However, Stanton said, "when you do go the extra mile the ladies really appreciate it and their thank you's keep me going. When I meet special dietary needs such as specializing gluten free

and vegan food I always feel great about what I am doing because everyone should be able to enjoy food in the same way.”

At the High Altitude Research Station, Tabbatt works on making masterpieces at elevations up to 11,500 near Nederland, Colorado. Tabbatt said, “it can take up to five hours to cook beans up there, when it would take thirty minutes anywhere else.”

Terri Cronin, Tabbatt’s kitchen manager and coworker of ten years at The High Altitude Research Station, said his creativity in the kitchen goes a long way, “you give Lane anything in a basket and he can come up with a recipe.” Like the TV show *chopped*, Tabbatt can often create a masterpiece out of random ingredients.

Chefs can cook the same meals, but they never make the same dishes. Each plate offers a different story because it belongs to a different chef. Tabbatt’s story runs across the nation but remains rooted in his creativity and passion for food. While thousands of students taste Tabbatt’s cooking every year, they rarely see the lifelong journey of how that food ended up on their plate.

Story Memo:

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Source List:

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