

mendocino

GRILLE AND WINE BAR

Executive Chef Samuel Whitcomb

Samuel Whitcomb was born and raised in the pastoral setting of Massachusetts' Pioneer Valley, the second son of John and Kathryn's three. Graduating high school with honors, he matriculated at the University of Massachusetts Amherst in the School of Management. Running short on money and interest, he left the university to focus his attention elsewhere and enlisted in the United States Coast Guard.

Sam was trained as a cook and an EMT in Petaluma, California and subsequently stationed in Norfolk, Boston and Rockland, Maine, where he served on afloat units with distinction and advanced quickly in rank. The Coast Guard afforded Sam the unique opportunity to travel widely through the world, particularly within the Caribbean and Mediterranean where he enjoyed the cultures and culinary traditions of the countries within. He was discharged honorably after six years with the service, and moved to Northampton, Massachusetts to pursue his culinary passions.

It took him one year in the “real world” of the restaurant industry to realize that he had found his calling, and so he enrolled at the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York, as a member of the college's first advanced program. Sam realized quickly the importance of seasonality and the impact of using it to support the local economy. He graduated and moved to Washington, DC in early 2007.

His choice was based upon the scale and importance of the city and its emerging food scene as well as the proximity of his family who was living nearby in Maryland and DC. The bountiful nature of the surrounding local area, having abundant farmland in every direction and bordering the Chesapeake also influenced his decision.

Sam is fortunate to have worked in the kitchens of RJ Cooper, Jeff Buben, Brendan Cox and Jeff Tunks in his first three years living in the city. He learned eagerly and hungrily over the course of his first three years, practicing his craft in the kitchens of Vidalia, Notti Bianche and DC Coast.

He cites his greatest achievement to date as somehow duping his fiancée into falling in love with him. In his limited free time Sam enjoys traveling the local area, visiting farms, gardening, cooking for his friends, family and fiancée, and working on his 1966 Ford pickup, which he affectionately refers to as “Rusty,” “The Beast,” and other sometimes more colorful names.

Sam's dream is to eventually own and operate a small farm and run his restaurant based upon the produce he grows.