



Collierville's Chef Steph Cook started his RAWK'N Grub food truck business last November, using raw, local ingredients and a rock star chef's touch to create a unique menu.

Photo by Michael Ward

# CLIMBING THE CHARTS

*Collierville chef dishes out 'RAWK'N' eats with new food truck*

BY CHRISTINA MORGAN

With items like the “C.C. Slider” and “Cheesy Like Sunday Morning” taking center stage on his menu, Chef Steph Cook has found a way to harmonize both musical and culinary goodness.

With a full, mobile kitchen, the Collierville resident offers more than 20 choices from his food truck, RAWK'N Grub.

“Rawk is for ‘raw’ and the ‘K’ is for the ‘K’ in rock n’ roll,” Cook explains of the business moniker. “A rockin’ chef’s take on good ole Southern Americana grub.” Using mostly raw ingredients, Cook also features products from local vendors and businesses when available.

“Things on my menu I could do myself, like cheesecake I can do, bread I can do,” he explained. “I hate baking. I use a local bakery – D & R Bakery to get my bread.”

Cook noted that promoting those from his own backyard helps introduce various local goods to

customers, and serves as a way to give back to those who have assisted him along his journey.

“I could make my own grits, and instead of buying pre-packaged grits, there’s a lady named Georgeanne Ross, who is a dear friend of mine who helped me out, as well in numerous ways,” Cook said, referring to the woman also known as the original GritGirl from Oxford, Miss. “If money was tight, she’d ship me 10 pounds of grits and say, ‘Here you go, it’s on me.’ She’s amazing.”

Purchasing his truck from Colorado, Cook started his mobile eatery at the onset of winter last November, a risky decision that turned out to be a wise one.

“The worst time to start a truck,” he admitted. “We laid the foundation and worked out all the kinks and the bugs, to where now, I know how to execute this truck. I could not imagine working out the problems I had during this peak time.”

Those problems, which Cook even deemed life-threatening at times, included a loose propane tank

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that nearly caught fire on the cross-country trek to its new home, and severely deflated tires.

Whatever intervened to keep both Cook and the truck safe, is something he cannot explain.

“Regardless, I guess, of your personal, spiritual, religious beliefs, I do feel there’s some kind of outside force on this truck,” he noted. “Two times this truck could have been devastated.”

Cook, originally from Memphis, is a self-taught chef who worked in various places in Memphis before moving to Florida years ago, where he learned from culinary experts at many well-known restaurants.

“I had some great talent (around me),” he recalled. “And I took quite a bit of advantage of the knowledge around me.”

Part of Cook’s journey in Florida he doesn’t mind sharing with others is the time he served in prison.

“Unfortunately, there was a side hap of a DUI that was not good and it cost me eight years of my life,” Cook explained. “I made the mistake and paid the price for it. That’s what I try to use and I love speaking to young people. I view that as you make bad choices in life, you suffer consequences, but that doesn’t mean you have to continue alcoholism, drug addiction. Making poor choices does not mean that’s how you have to continue to live your life.”

During his sentence, Cook served as a chef and continued to cultivate his passion for food.

“When I first saw and heard of food trucks, again, this is during my tenure of being incarcerated,” he recalled, “I thought, ‘Wow, you don’t have to go into the same place every day.’ It’s a new adventure every day. Each day I tell myself as we go out, ‘Let the adventure begin.’”

Cook returned to Memphis four years ago and worked at different places – even started up Memphis Mojo Café in Bartlett – before eventually pursuing the food truck passion that had been brewing within him.

His journey to getting RAWK’N Grub rolling would not have been possible without the many kind people he’s met along the way.

“If it weren’t for the local people, I don’t even know where I’d be right now,” Cook acknowledged. “My investors Dottie and Thara Burana – owners of Bangkok Alley – they bought the truck and they are lease purchasing it to me. If it weren’t for their patience, their vision and their belief, and after they tried my food and saw that we had something good going, I wouldn’t have made it this far.”

Local business owner Tommy Hart of Hart Properties, along with Sherri Beutelschies and Spencer Hart, have all helped Cook by finding a warehouse for his truck to keep it safe from the elements.

“They’ve been amazing,” he noted.

Cook also mentioned the neighboring businessmen who have loaned him tools, given mechanical advice and even welded parts of his truck for him.

“You know what? Stuck on the inside of the truck above the window where only us on the inside can see it ... when my partner and I brought the truck back, we stopped at Panda Express, grabbed a fortune cookie and the fortune cookie read, ‘Important associates will be there for you if needed.’” Cook concluded.

Find RAWK’N Grub on Facebook and Twitter and check out the interactive website, rawkng grub.com to find out where Cook will be serving up his rock-infused creations next.

### Crop Availability/Harvest Calendar for Tennessee

<b>PRODUCE:</b>	<b>TYPICAL AVAILABILITY DATE:</b>
Asparagus	April 20 - May 30
Autumn Olive	August - Sept.
Bok Choy	October 1 - November 15
Beets	July 1 - July 30
Bell Pepper	July 7 - October 10
Broccoli	May 10 - June 10 & October 1 - November 15
Cabbage	May 7 - November 15
Cauliflower	May 10 - June 10
Chinese Cabbage	October 1 - November 15
Carrots	May 1 - July 1
Cherry Tomatoes	June 15 - October 15
Collards	April 1 - June 1
Cucumbers	June 15 - September 30
Elephant Garlic	June 15 - August 31
Eggplant	July 10 - September 30
English Peas	July 1 - October 15
Field Peas	July 1 - October 15
Garlic	June 15 - August 31
Gourds	Year-round
Greens	Apr 15 - Jun 21 & Sep 21 - Nov 20
Herbs	Year-round
Honey	Year-round
Hot Peppers	July 1 - October 31
Indian Corn	Year-round
Irish Potatoes	July 1 - October 1
Kale	May 1 - Jun 21 & Sep 25 - Nov 20
Leeks	June 1 - July 31
Lettuce	May 1 - June 21
Limas	July 10 - October 15
Mushrooms	Year-round (depending on type)
Mustard	May 1 - June & September 21 - November 20
October Beans	July 15 - October 15
Okra	July 15 - October 10
Onions	May - August 31
Pecans	October 1 - December . 31
Pimento Peppers	July 7 - October 10
Polebeans	June 20 - September 20
Popcorn	October 1 - November 31
Pumpkins	September 15 - October 31
Shelly Beans	June 10 - October 1
Snapbeans	June 10 - October 1
Sorghum Syrup	October 1 - March 31
Snow Peas	May 1 - June 10
Spinach	May 1 - June 21
Sugar Peas	July 15 - September 15
Sweet Potatoes Plants	May 1 - June 10
Sweet Potatoes	August 21 - March 31
Squash	June 1 - October 31
Sweet Corn	June 25 - September 25
Tomatoes	June 15 - October 15
Turnips	September 10 - November 20
Wax Beans	June 20 - September 20

<b>PRODUCE:</b>	<b>TYPICAL AVAILABILITY DATE:</b>
Apples	June 15 - December 1
Blackberries	June 7 - October 10
Blueberries	June 21 - August 21
Boysenberries	June 21 - August 21
Cantaloupe	June 25 - September 10
Cherries	June 15 - July 31
Dried Apples	August 1 - December . 1
Gooseberries	June 15 - July 31
Grapes	July 25 - September 15
Muscadine Grapes	July 25 - September 15
Nectarines	July 1 - July 20
Peaches	June 1 - September 15
Pears	September 1 - October 10
Plums	July 1 - July 31
Raspberries	May 20 - October 10
Rhubarb	May 1 - June 30
Strawberries	May 1 - June 10
Watermelons	September 10 - November 20