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# HOME

Chef Theo Petron

## [A Guide to Reinventing Yourself]

Chef Theo Petron, part of the duo that runs the Newtown-based personal chef service, A La Maison, considers his crab cakes among the best around, braises beef like nobody's business and, in minutes, whips up a Sunday dinner that would make your mother-in-law envious.

"Cooking touches so many senses. It's the most intimate thing you can do for someone," says Petron, whose culinary skills have already earned him several accomplishments, including being selected to compete in the inaugural "Sears Chef Challenge" last summer and working on the hit TV show, "Cook What You Catch." "The creativity of it all is the key."

With ambitions to work in an ad agency like the guys on "thirtysomething," the Minnesota native initially earned a marketing degree. He spent 12 years in advertising sales before burning himself out. At the time, Petron made a list of 100 things he wanted to do before he died—"kind of like a bucket list before it became trendy," he says. One of his goals was to work in a restaurant.

It wasn't a far stretch for Petron, then a closet foodie. He began cooking in college for his frat brothers, made pasta from scratch, read *Gourmet* magazine faithfully and spent weekends scouring supermarket aisles for obscure recipe ingredients.

Petron landed a nonpaying gig at his favorite French bistro and, on his first day, had to hand-wash 50 pounds of chicken wings. "I wanted to get my hands dirty. I carried a black Moleskine notebook and wrote down everything I saw," he says.

With six months worth of savings and a renewed sense of purpose, Petron quit his advertising job and was soon offered a chef position at the bistro for \$8 an hour. "It was a great foundation," he says. "I used that as my classroom."

A year later, buoyed by his family's entrepreneurial spirit, Petron started Dinnerwhere, a personal chef business. "I could be my own boss and make my own hours," says Petron, who enjoys sailing, cycling and a good glass of wine.

In 2008, he moved to Newtown, where his girlfriend, Melissa Wieczorek, owned A La Maison. The two became business partners and provide "super-fresh, healthy, customized" meals and in-home cooking classes for clients in Central Bucks.

The couple also recently expanded to The Solebury Club in Buckingham, where Petron oversees the café. It's all a part of their perfect recipe, Petron says, and it also pairs perfectly with his lifelong motto: "Eat well or don't eat at all." —Kristin Boyd

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