

Who's Who In The Kitchen

Best Western's New Chef Started Cooking Career In The Fourth Grade

By Audrey C. Lodato
Post Staff Writer

Now a chef for Best Western Coliseum Hotel on E. Independence Blvd., Dwight Mitchell's cooking career began in the fourth grade. "I was staying with my aunt in New York, and she decided she wasn't going to get up and make me breakfast," Mitchell recalls. "So I learned myself. I loved farina." (Farina, for the uninitiated, is a wheat product similar to grits.)

Despite his time spent in the North, Mitchell is basically a native Charlottean.

During his teens, he learned more about cooking in school. Afterwards, he got a job as a dishwasher and back-up cook through a friend. From there, he went on to salads. Gradually over the years working in Ohio and New York, as well as locally, Mitchell evolved into a true professional.

"Cooking's not something you just jump into," he remarks. "If you don't have the talent, all the schooling in the world won't do you any good. You have to get in at the bottom and work your way into it."

The chef laughs when he explains what he likes about his line of work. "You don't have to freeze in the winter, or burn up outside in the hot summer sun, or worry about where to eat." Pretty good reasons, wouldn't you say?

He also likes the creative aspects of the job. "You get to create things, make pictures out of plates. It's like art," he says.

Mitchell advises that, in order to be successful in the food business, "you have to know how to cook the original recipe, not somebody's version of it." Some chefs, he points out, insist a dish be done the way it was done originally, with no experimenting. But that attitude depends

on the chef. Now that he's in charge of a kitchen, he gets to make those decisions.

Mitchell likes to prepare hot dishes. One of his favorites is beef tips sauteed with onions, peppers, and mushrooms, with a dash of burgundy to bring out the flavor. "My family loves this," he says of the dish, which he likes to serve over noodles or rice.

Some day, he'd like to have a catering business, hopefully within the next five years, he comments. "I've done a few parties on my own," Mitchell says, "but I want to be sure I know enough to satisfy

myself and my customers."

His attitude is to learn as much as he can about the food business wherever he is. "It's a learning experience," he says of his present job as kitchen manager. "You get to know if your ideas are what you think they are. When things go wrong, it's on you. You get the credit and the blame."

You might think that working around food all day would affect one's appetite, but such is not the case with this cook. "I go home and still eat a big meal," he laughs.

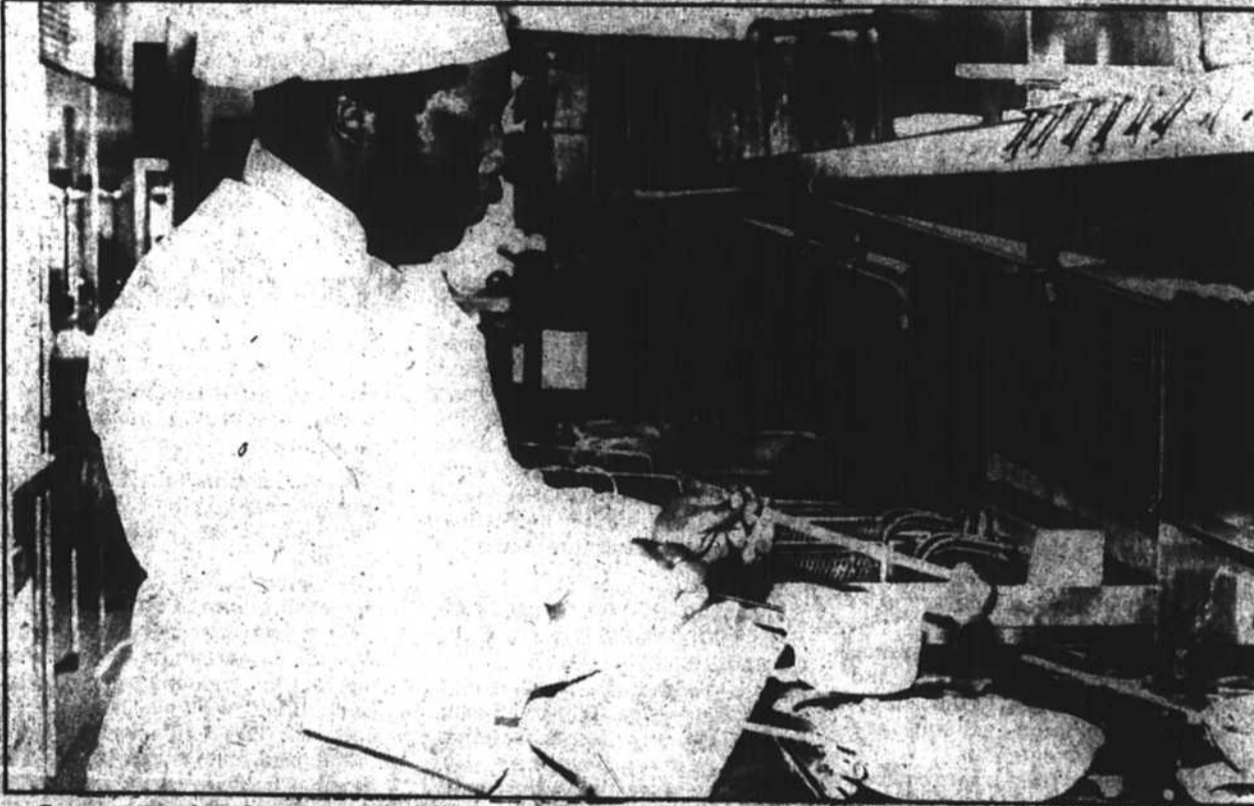
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Sundays and your holidays!" Until recently, Mitchell never had a Sunday off.

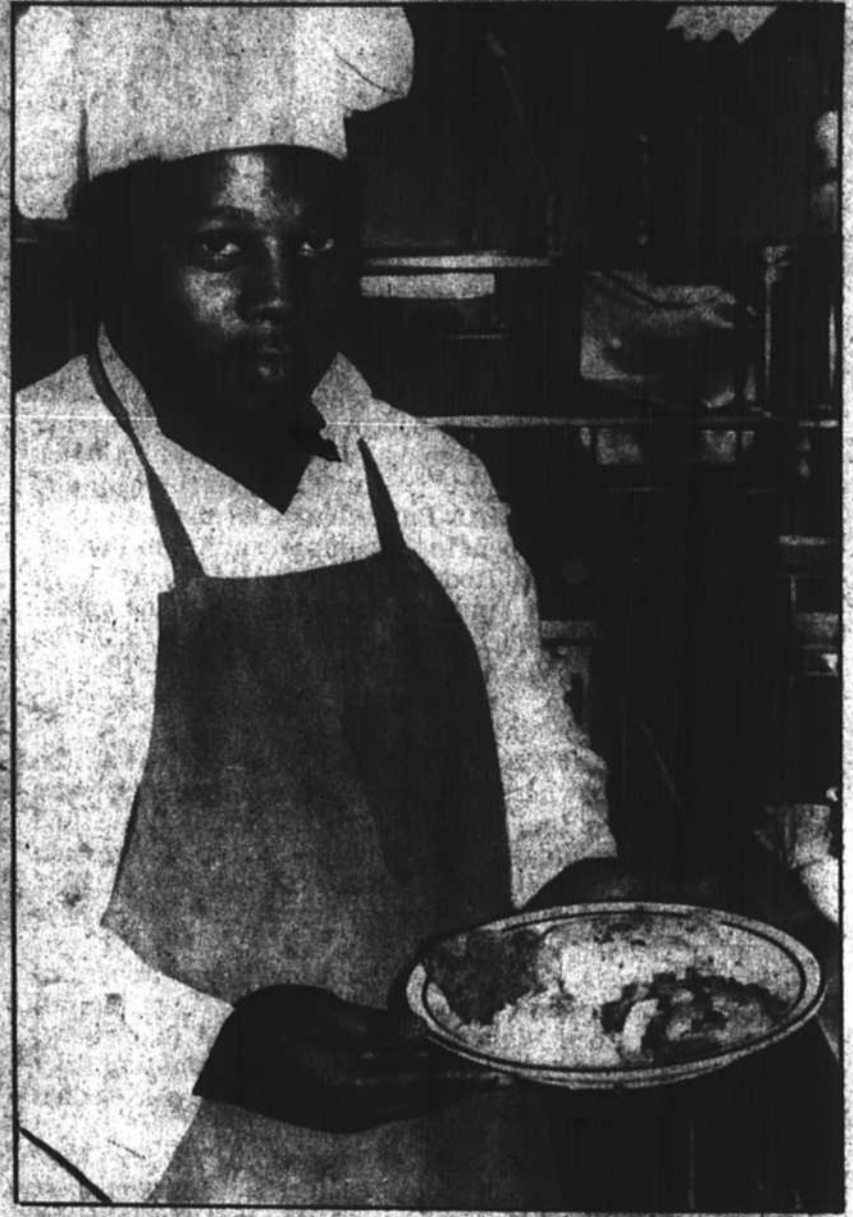
What does Mitchell like to do in the time he does have off? "I enjoy the social scene in Charlotte and elsewhere. I go clubbing every once in a while. I like to get out there and hang loose."

Having cooked in both the North and South, Mitchell says there's a difference. "Southern food isn't really gourmet," he believes, and in that respect, he prefers northern style cooking.

Here, Mitchell shares with you a few of his favorite recipes.



Cream sauce is a key component of tasty "Chicken Supreme." Flour and herbs are stirred into melted butter, then cream and egg yolk are added.



Chef Mitchell displays his "Chicken Supreme" with vegetables and rice. (Photo by Audrey Lodato)

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MEATBALL STROGANOFF

- 1 lb. ground beef
- 1 small onion
- 1/3 c. bread crumbs
- Parsley to taste
- 1 egg
- 1/2 c. cold water
- Salt, pepper
- 2 Tbsp. fat
- 1/4 Tbsp. flour
- 2 c. beef broth
- 1/2 c. sour cream
- 1 can (4 oz.) sliced mushrooms, drained

Mix first seven ingredients and form into tiny 1/4" meatballs. Bake in single layer in greased pan at 375 for 15 min., or brown in lightly greased skillet. Keep warm. Melt fat in saucepan; add flour and simmer til light brown. Heat broth and add to flour. Whip til smooth. Cook 5 min. Add sour cream and mushrooms. Pour over meatballs. Serve over buttered noodles. Serves 6.

BROILED SWORDFISH WITH CUCUMBER SAUCE

- 2 lb. swordfish or other white fish
- Paprika
- Juice of fresh lemon
- Bay leaves
- 2 Tbsp. butter
- 2 Tbsp. flour, sifted
- 1 c. milk
- 1 cucumber, cut in quarters the long way, and seeded
- 3 small tomatoes
- Parsley for garnish

Broil fish in 1/4" water, to which bay leaves have been added. Sprinkle with paprika. Squeeze lemon over. Meanwhile, bring butter to boil and stir in flour with whisk. Set aside. Bring milk to a boil, stirring constantly over low heat. Stir in butter mixture; season to taste. Puree cucumber with sauce in blender. Cut tomatoes in half and scoop out pulp. Fill with sauce. Sprinkle with paprika and garnish with parsley. Serve with fish.

CHICKEN SUPREME

- 1 chicken breast
 - 1 Tbsp. butter
 - 1/4 Tbsp. flour
 - 1 Tbsp. parsley, finely chopped
 - 2 scallions, finely chopped
 - 1 Tbsp. shallots, finely chopped
 - Garlic
 - Salt
 - Pepper
 - Grated nutmeg
 - 1 egg yolk, beaten
 - 1/4 c. cream
 - 1 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- Poach chicken in enough water to cover. Melt butter in saucepan. Stir in flour, parsley, scallions, shallots, garlic, salt and pepper to taste, and a pinch of nutmeg. Cook over low heat for a few minutes. Mix egg yolk with cream and gradually stir in flour mixture. Stir until the sauce coats the spoon. Add lemon juice. Serve sauce over chicken.

Gourmet Treat Is Easy To Make

Pectin candy is a gourmet treat that can be great for holiday entertaining or gift giving. It's inexpensive and easy to make...even though it is priced at upwards of \$10 per pound at candy and better department stores.

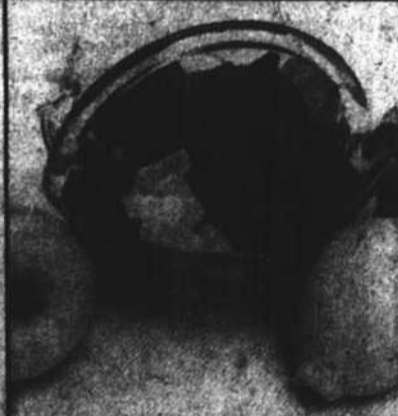
Making pectin candy at home will cost you less than \$2 per pound. The candy can be made with nearly any type of fruit juice or pureed fruit for a variety of different flavors such as apricot, strawberry, lemon, grape or pineapple. For an unusual twist, nuts may be added.

This tasty candy is simple to prepare; there is no need for a candy thermometer or starch molds. For a unique and personal gift, put the candy in a cloth-lined basket or decorative jar.

Here is a recipe for apple pectin candy. Other recipes for pectin candy may be obtained by writing MCP Foods, Inc., P. O. Box 3633, Anaheim, CA 92803.

APPLE PECTIN CANDY

- 1 c. apple juice or applesauce
- 1 pkg. MCP Pectin
- 1/2 tsp. baking soda
- 1/2 tsp. butter or shortening
- 1/2 c. light corn syrup
- 1 1/2 c. sugar
- 1/4 c. lemon juice
- 1/2 c. coarsely chopped walnuts (optional)



A great gift can be homemade candy with the flavor of fruit.

Measure apple juice or applesauce into large kettle. Stir in the Pectin. Add baking soda and stir well to distribute thoroughly or the soda will react in spots and darken the juice. Place over heat, add butter or shortening. (This reduces foaming.) Heat to full boil. Add light corn syrup and sugar. Bring back to full boil and boil vigorously for exactly five minutes, stirring continuously. Remove from heat and add lemon juice. Stir well. Add walnuts if desired. Pour into 9-inch oiled pan. Depth should be one-half inch. Allow to harden 24 hours. Cut sheets into pieces of suitable size. Dust pieces with confectioner's sugar.

OLD SOUTH BANANA BREAD

- 3 ripe large Dole Bananas
 - 1/2 cup butter, softened
 - 1/2 cup packed brown sugar
 - 1/2 cup granulated sugar
 - 1 egg
 - 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
 - 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
 - 2/3 cup unprocessed bran
 - 1/2 cup whole wheat flour
 - 2 teaspoons baking powder
 - 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
 - 1/4 teaspoon salt
 - 1/4 cup chopped figs
 - 1/4 cup chopped walnuts
- Mash bananas to make 1 1/2 cups. Cream butter and sugars until light and fluffy. Beat in mashed bananas, egg and vanilla. Combine flours, bran, baking powder, cinnamon and salt. Beat into banana mixture until blended. Stir in figs and walnuts. Pour into a well-greased 9 x 5-inch loaf pan. Bake in 350 degree oven 1 hour 15 minutes until the bread tests done. Cool in pan 10 minutes. Turn onto wire rack to complete cooling. Makes 1 loaf.
- For more terrific banana recipes, write to Dole Bananas, Dept. 85, P.O. Box 7758, San Francisco, CA 94120.

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