

## GHS Students To Learn Culinary Skills from Local Chef

Written by Jaime Elliott

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Eleven Giff Hill School students sitting at a long dining table in an otherwise empty downtown Cruz Bay restaurant on a recent Monday afternoon weren't on a field trip, but actually in class.

Walter Hinds, owner of Hinds Restaurant, is teaching a cooking class for the private island school for the first time this semester. One afternoon a week, the restaurant, which is not open for lunch, transforms into a classroom for 10 seniors and one sophomore enrolled in the school's new "Meal Preparation" elective class.

After Hinds met GHS head Ben Biddle, the two came up with the idea to start a cooking class for the island school, explained the chef.

"Ben and I had been talking about starting a cooking class, and we decided to go ahead and do it this year," said Hinds. "I love the kids and I think it's important to know about proper food techniques."

Hinds also wanted to share his passion for cuisine with the students, he added.

"My first experience in a kitchen was in a home economics class, so I wanted these kids to get that opportunity," said Hinds. "While this is not a chef's class, it's a great opportunity to introduce kids to the world of food and culinary arts."

The students' experience levels varied from being the son of an eminent Love City chef — La Tapa owner Alex Ewald's son Tristan is enrolled — to not knowing how to boil water. Looking

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ahead to college, many of the students also wanted to be comfortable in a kitchen without their parents' help.

"I signed up for the class because when I go off to college next year I want to be able to cook for myself," said GHS senior Afrika Anthony. "I don't really cook much at all right now, so I'm excited to learn some things."

"I want to be able to cook for myself and not ruin what I'm making," said Shaiman Lalich, a senior at GHS.

Before the students could get inside the kitchen, however, Hinds first hosted class in the dining room, discussing food safety and cooking techniques.

"There are things the students need to know before they even go near food," said Hinds.

In the first hour-and-a-half class, Hinds taught the students about food and kitchen safety, from food-borne illness and cross contamination to fire safety and health and hygiene.

Throughout the 11-week course, the chef plans to instruct students in preparing everything from stocks, sauces and soups to meat and poultry. Ingredient identification, tools and equipment and baking instruction are also on the syllabus.

While Hinds designed the class to be fun, it will not be an easy "A" for students.

"The students will have quizzes every other week," Hinds said. "There will be a graded final at the end of the semester which is going to be fun and will have some surprises for the students, but it won't be easy."

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While this is Hinds' first time teaching high school students, the chef did teach an adult cooking class back in New York. And if the three pages of single spaced typed notes covering terms from "mis en place" to "al dente" Hinds handed out at a second class is any indication, he's not taking the class lightly himself.

"I'm really getting into this," said Hinds. "I've spent a lot of time designing the course and I'm excited about it."

Hinds has also enlisted the help of Tracy Thompson who is assisting the chef with the class.

"I come to the restaurant a lot and Walter and I became friends," said Thompson. "I love to cook and I love his cooking. I also wanted to help out with the class because I want to learn some of Walter's secrets."

While Hinds is keeping busy one day a week discussing proper braising and sauteing techniques with his students, the chef is spending the rest of his time gearing up to re-open the restaurant on October 22.

This season, Hinds will unveil some exciting new features at his restaurant. A new bar menu, featuring raw bar items and luxury snacks, like foie gras cotton candy, will be available as well as a new price fix early dining menu. For reservations call Hinds Restaurant at 775-9951.