



Chef Evan Hennessey and Michael Meserve.

COURTESY PHOTO RON ST. JEAN

Culinary collaboration

*Amy's Treat and Stages at One Washington
share in 'Comfort and Joy' dinner*

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The kitchen at Stages at One Washington will be a beehive of activity this Saturday, Dec. 1, but not buzzing or frenetic.

It's the nature of Chef Evan Hennessey's kitchen to maintain a subdued attitude to ensure the ultimate concentration on delicate techniques like foaming and making ice cream with nitrogen or decorating a plate of food, flower petal by petal. It's a wonderful example of culinary choreography as well as a delicious dinner.

Participating on Saturday will be a talented chef who is neither formally trained nor working in a kitchen professionally, no, the guest chef of the evening is Amy's Treat board treasurer and Seacoast Cancer Center radiation therapist Michael Meserve. That evening, he'll show off his culinary skills and work with Hennessey to benefit Delivering Cheer — Toys and Treats through Amy's Treats, an all-volunteer, nonprofit group that offers need-based solutions and special outings to individuals whose life has been altered by cancer.

The theme of the evening is "Comfort and Joy," a fitting one for Amy's Treats,

which provides both to cancer patients. Meserve is eager to help, this time with his culinary skills.

"Evan let me come up with the menu. I really wanted something that had to do with the season and with Amy's Treats. I was working out in the yard and I thought of 'Comfort and Joy.' I just gave him my ideas and he translated them into dishes that are attainable, but he preserved my ideas and put his spin on them. I'd been working out of Thomas Keller's 'French Laundry' cookbook and it had a great duck recipe in it with confit of leg and he

See *COLLABORATION*, Page B3

COLLABORATION: 'Comfort and Joy' dinner

Continued from page B1

put his spin on that. My opener is a beet salad. I love roasted beets."

The five-course menu, paired with wine, includes dishes like Parisienne gnocchi, fresh ricotta, chestnut puree, glazed pork belly and chinon, monkfish with saffron-lobster sauce, kale, pommes maxim, and parsnips and Rohan duck breast and confit of the leg, Hudson Valley foie gras, pears and rutabaga. It's all a far cry from the food the now radiation therapist started his culinary adventures with back in high school.

"I grew up in Maine and my mom is an amazing, resourceful cook. She had four boys and when I was 7 she was ill and she went into the hospital. I was the oldest and she sat me down and told me how to do everything in the home. Then later, my grandparents owned a diner — their 'retirement' in Gorham. I was washing dishes there at 13. My grandmother didn't believe men could cook but I was working the breakfast shift. One day the cook called

in sick and my grandmother wasn't there. I said to my grandfather, 'let me do this.' I was 17. She walked in at 10 a.m. to get the cash and I told her everything was under control, you just go out and talk to people. I worked there all through college. When I moved to Washington, D.C., I was at the National Cancer Institute and we all cooked for each other — people from all over the world. I read cookbooks like they're novels."

Now, Meserve is taking what he's learned and bringing his own brand of Comfort and Joy to Stages.

"Evan and I sat down and talked about his philosophy and mine and one of my mantras of entertaining is to have everything done an hour before so I can take a shower and have a cocktail and he 'got' that. He's a very relaxed chef. It was an organic process. On Friday, Nov. 30, I'll go in and prep. It's great because he's donating himself, the restaurant, the staff. He's such a great guy. He wants it to be about community and we want to create annual events people look forward to like our an-

First course
Beets & Turnips, curry, pumpkin-carrot royale, mirepoix greens, orange campalou vouvray, la cuvee des fondraux, 2010
Second course
Parisienne gnocchi, fresh ricotta, chestnut puree, glazed pork belly chinon, domaine charles joguet, cuvee terrior, 2009
Third course
Monkfish, saffron-lobster sauce, kale, pommes maxim, parsnips chateau ducasse, herve dubourdieu, bordeaux, 2010
Fourth course
Rohan duck breast and confit of the leg, hudson valley foie gras, pears, rutabaga domaiune pere caboche, cotes de rhone, chateaneuf du pape, 2010
Fifth course
Carrot enriched 'pain d'epices', salted chocolate, chai custard, chocolate 'rocks' domaine la tour vieille, banyuls, vendages, 2006

nual auction and fundraisers like this that attract different people."

Including a collaboration with North Hampton's Throwback Brewery for a special Amy's Treat brew, which will

be released this winter, but for now, Meserve will experience his own "treat" while helping the organization he loves — collaborating at Stages with Hennessey, a treat, really, for everyone.