

Turnin' Up the Heat ON CHARLESTON'S EAST BAY STREET

By Wendy Swat Snider

The cobblestoned corner of Cumberland and East Bay streets in Charleston, SC is bustling with activity as the sun grows dim and street lights appear. In the entryway of Charleston Cooks! Kitchen Store stands a little blackboard sign with a scrawled message about tonight's sold-out culinary show.

It's close to 6:30 pm and guests are streaming into the studio, saying 'hello' to acquaintances, finding seats. There's an air of anticipation as the state-of-the-art cameras swing into action and images flicker across the wide-screen DVD monitor. Tonight's celebrity chef—Scott Crawford, of the nationally acclaimed Woodlands Resort & Inn in Summerville, SC—chats it up with the audience while his microphone is snapped into place. In the kitchen, an assistant finishes some last minute prepping, Crawford steps up to the granite counter to a roomful of applause, and...its showtime!

FoodTV look out—not only are they really cookin' at Charleston

Crawford encourages an easy give and take with his students, fielding questions with the same thoughtfulness he applies to his creations. Where do morels come from? Where can they be bought? How did he arrive at this wine pairing?

Back in the retail store, shelves overflow with eye-candy for the well-appointed kitchen, and customers are eating it up. From Swiss-made pressure cookers to multi-functional processors, the store is stocked with the hottest and the best products available.

Adjoining the store proper is a well-rounded library of cookbooks for sale. A small sampling: The New Lowcountry Cookbook, Halleluyah! The Welcome Table, Kinkead's Cookbook, Hoppin'

Not only are they really cookin' at Charleston Cooks! Kitchen Store, but the audience can question the cooks, get in on the cooking action themselves, and best of all—sample everything on the menu du jour

Cooks! Kitchen Store, but the audience can question the cooks, get in on the cooking action themselves, and best of all—sample everything on the menu du jour. The brainchild of Maverick Southern Kitchens, Charleston Cooks! opened its doors in December 2004, and hit the ground running. A cookware store, bookstore, and cooking classroom under one roof, it's the first of its kind in the Lowcountry. The goal: to heighten the cooking experience with great gadgets and instruction on the art of food preparation by leading guest chefs and staff.

Founder Dick Elliott, the mind behind Charleston restaurants such as Slightly North of Broad, High Cotton, Old Village Post House, knew the area had the potential to support such an enterprise.

"I was very conscious of the fact that Charleston was developing a reputation for wonderful restaurants, and had a long history of developing food in this region," says Elliott. "I wanted visitors to the area to be exposed to it."

Tonight, the Viking stoves are sizzling with some of the secrets that have made Woodlands the state's only Mobil Five-Star and AAA Five-Diamond dining room. Earthy aromas waft through the audience as tiny delicacy-bearing dishes make their way from chef to diner. Crawford's selections come from the fresh bounty of spring: truffle poached asparagus and morel mushrooms with prosciutto di Parma and sherry essence followed by garlic roasted spring lamb, sweet onion fava bean ragu, and a smoked tomato jus.

John's Lowcountry Cooking, Nathalie Dupree's Southern Memories, The Carolina Rice Kitchen, the irreplaceable Charleston Receipts, and last but not least, Mrs. Whaley Entertains.

The books, the tools of the kitchen, and classes that put it all together—from Lowcountry classics like shrimp and grits to a pepper-seared tuna served in the nation's capitol—there's a learning experience to suit every palate and culinary skill level. At Charleston Cooks! everyday is a celebration of food.

Find out more...

Charleston Cooks! Kitchen Store
194 E. Bay St., Charleston SC 29401
843-722-1212 • www.charlestoncooks.com

