

By Meda Kessler

It's fitting that at one point in his career, Thomas Terrance McGrath III was a chef tournant.

For those of you not up on kitchen staff hierarchy, the CT is the person who can run any station, from grill to pastry. It translates as "the relief chef"; in the restaurant world, this person is the jack *and* master of all trades.

A Fort Worth native, the Country Day grad hit the ground running after graduating from Texas Tech with a restaurant and hotel management degree as well as training at the Culinary Institute of America.

While he now owns his own business in Fort Worth — Ultimate Cuisine and Events — McGrath honed his skills at venues where serving 600 people a plated dinner was all in a night's work. From country clubs to corporate kitchens to hotels, McGrath figured out how to get good food on the table, the hallmark of a skilled catering chef.

Today, the boyish McGrath, 39, makes people happy with his smoked cheddar mac and cheese, spicy tuna and avocado napoleons, and English pea and watermelon radish salad.

And McGrath is almost equally well known for giving generous portions of his time. It's difficult to find charitable events in Tarrant County that don't list a special thanks to McGrath, especially those involving kids or a program that gives back to the community; he was on the front line at Fort Worth's First United Methodist Church when hurricane evacuees arrived in town last year.

McGrath recently won the Debby Brown Volunteer of the Year Award from the Tarrant Area Food Bank for his yearly contributions to Empty Bowls — An Artful Luncheon to Fight Hunger. TAFB also cited McGrath for giving countless hours to its Operation Frontline, in which he teaches healthy cooking to budget-conscious families and senior citizens.

"Everyone loves a guy with a blowtorch, so it's fun to watch the kids get all wide-eyed when we make something special," says McGrath. "I fell in love with doing this, with giving my time, as it's not just about the food. This program really gives back."

Now McGrath is tackling a new venture and finally putting a stamp on a restaurant menu he can call his own, via the newly christened Café Nutt in Granbury.

"I've not had this kind of outlet, and when we [McGrath and his expectant wife and business partner, Andi] had this chance, we took it. It's in great shape and with about 110 seats, feels manageable," says McGrath, who spoke to chef Grady Spears to get the lay of the land. Spears cooked at the Nutt House in 2003.

"We're doing lunch Wednesday-Friday, dinner Wednesday-Saturday and a combination lunch/brunch on Sunday."

He's having a soft opening the July 4 weekend, and may even pass out samples. McGrath promises good, simple food, including the killer yeast rolls he makes with a recipe from the Woman's Club of Fort Worth and other favorites culled from his repertoire. "I can't wait," says McGrath.



## From soup to the Nutt

Chef Tom McGrath can now add restaurateur to his long and impressive list of credentials

*Tom McGrath inside his new restaurant, the old Nutt House in Granbury*

*Photo by Ralph Lauer*

### DETAILS

#### Café Nutt

119 E. Bridge St., Granbury; 1-817-579-6868

[www.cafenutt.com](http://www.cafenutt.com)

#### Ultimate Cuisine and Events

817-570-0997; [www.ultimatecuisinefw.com](http://www.ultimatecuisinefw.com)