

Charlotte

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HOME

DESIGN & DECOR®

KITCHEN & BATH

THE MATTE BLACK KITCHEN

EXPLORE AN EASTOVER HOME
DESIGNED WITH A LITTLE DRAMA

Contributor

SOUL
FOODJ I M
N O B L ENOBLE
BEGINNINGS

It was the summer of 1981. My heart was in the service industry, but after working in bars and nightclubs for the better part of six years, I'd hit a metaphorical wall. In the kitchen is where I wanted to be. The trouble was, I didn't know much about cooking – especially the type of cooking for which people would pay. Enter, Julia Child's classic cookbook, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. Both volumes. At twenty-six years old, this wasn't a small investment. But after a few weeks of internal debate, I finally pulled the trigger.

I was in Clemson, living in a small apartment with a 150-square foot kitchen that was makeshift, at best. My tools consisted of a few enamel cast irons and sharp knives – the basics. There were more disasters than successes, but as overwhelming as French cooking can be, Julia Child helped make it approachable. And when my first chicken fricassee, complete with a white wine reduction and herb bouquets, came together into a delicious meal, my mind was absolutely blown. Almost forty years later, with worn edges and dog-eared pages, these two volumes still have a home on my kitchen bookshelf.

The value of wine and its place in cooking was consistently talked about in the materials I'd been devouring – Sancerre and chèvre, Bordeaux and duck confit, Saunter and crème brûlée. The list goes on. In the summer of 1983, I had the opportunity to visit Napa, California and it changed everything. The marriage of food and wine was like nothing I had ever experienced, and bringing it back, sharing it with the Carolinas became my mission.

I opened the first Noble's restaurant in High Point on July 6, 1983. The food was locally grown, the menu was scratch-made, and everything in the wine cellar was French. We cut no corners, invested in quality ingredients, and promised consistency to our guests. This was a great time – a fun time. There were jazz musicians playing downstairs five nights a week, and we harvested from our own herb garden. It was also in 1983 that we added a bakery that specialized in rustic breads.



That first 150-square foot kitchen feels like it was a million years ago and also just yesterday. Over the years our kitchens have evolved, but the principals have stayed the same. We moved the Noble's concept to Winston-Salem in 1992 and then opened our first Charlotte location in 2000. Rooster's in SouthPark followed in 2006, as well as The King's Kitchen in 2010 and Rooster's Uptown in 2012.

The most recent addition to our restaurant group is Copain, a French-style bakery and catering kitchen. The kitchen is currently being installed in the same building as Rooster's SouthPark. The retail side of things won't open until the fall, but catering and online bakery orders for Copain are up and running. In fact, we recently catered for Capitol's twentieth-anniversary party at North Corner Haven.

It's 2018, and a barbecue concept that has been on my mind for the past twenty-six years will finally be a reality. For years I'd promised myself a smoke shop, and I am excited to announce that Noble Smoke will open at 2216 Freedom Drive later this year. Carolina pulled-pork and my sixteen-hour brisket will be menu staples, but we'll also be serving fresh and seasonal produce from local farms while avoiding traditional deep-fried sides. It's a nod to the greats who paved the way, with a twist of our own.

The apartment kitchen where it all started is a bit different than the kitchens we're working in now, but the heart of the experience is the same. Those two worn books still grace my kitchen bookshelf, and my passion for delivering only the best dining experiences is a constant. So stay tuned – new ideas for Charlotte food are already in the works. But more on that later. ♦

Chef Jim Noble is the executive chef and owner of Noble Food and Pursuits. His belief in providing restoration through food led him to launch The King's Kitchen, a non-profit restaurant in Uptown Charlotte, as well as the Charlotte Mecklenburg Dream Center. These days, you'll likely find Chef Noble sitting at Table 11 in Rooster's SouthPark working on his latest projects, Noble Smoke and Copain, both of which are set to open in late 2018. For more information, visit www.noblefoodandpursuits.com.

