

## I've learned much from my boss and my mentor

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I have been working with Chef Tim Creehan now for about the last four years and it has been an honor the entire way. It certainly hasn't always been a joy; or fun; or easy, but it's always been an honor and has usually been pretty exciting.

It dawned on me just recently that I have never featured any of Tim's recipes in the column. So, still sticking to the theme of foot-ball favorites, I present to you Tim's delicious smoked tuna dip.

Don't worry, you don't have to actually smoke the tuna. (This is not a promotional plug or an attempt to win Tim's favor; the product actually works.) Chef Tim Creehan's Grill Plus Marinade is perfect for almost any type of cooking and is both extremely flavorful and relatively healthy. I use the product at home (this sounds like a testimonial) and it really works (oh, it is a testimonial).

Here's a list of all the things that Tim has done for me in the relatively short period of time I've known him. He's been my: boss, mentor, friend, teacher, go-to-guy for culinary questions in a pinch, chauffeur, assistant (once, at a radio promo) and, (when it gets busy,) a coworker in the Beach Walk kitchen and at his Grill Plus Marinade manufacturing center.

I owe a lot to Chef Tim Creehan, as well as his corporate staff. They have provided me with essentials skills and have shown me their true passion for a trade that is both exhilarating and exhausting. I thank them and want them to know that I appreciate their extra effort with this slow learner. It certainly has not always been the best job, but through the rough times, I've really learned about the industry and how intense it can get. Without Tim, this column would not be successful and neither would I.

Not too many places out there, especially locally, stay true to the French artesian culinary trade process. In France, apprentices are sought out at a very young age and trained up at the local bakery, meat market, or restaurant. In the U.S., labor laws make it a risk for any chef to classically train in this manner. Tim and a handful of other chef-owners realize the value of training young. Tim has taken on students as young as 12 or 13 and opened up their eyes in his teaching kitchen. Some of his best success stories are long-time students turned chefs.

Here's a tip for you high school chef wannabes out there: I started Okaloosa School District CHOICE Culinary Arts Institute this week. It's a program for high school students who feel like they may have a passion for the culinary arts.

After only a week, I can see how truly worthwhile this program is and would recommend it

for any high schooler considering a career in cooking.

For this month's Food for Thought, I'd like to quote a cooking philosophy of Tim's that are really words to cook by: "Find the freshest and best ingredients you possible can, then prepare them simply." Succinct and completely true; nothing beats fresh and flavorful.

Thank you, Tim and Company. It is to you all that I dedicate this column.

Chow!

#### Chef Tim Creehan's Smoked Tuna Dip

½ pound fresh Yellowfin tuna (canned if fresh unavailable)

4 ounces water

8 ounces Mesquite Chef Tim Creehan's Grill Plus (available locally and online)

¾ pound softened cream cheese

½ cup finely chopped green onion

¼ cup finely chopped celery

Be sure to debone and completely clean tuna (if fresh). Grill tuna until cooked through. Puree cooked tuna and water in food processor. Combine the cream cheese and Grill Plus in a mixing bowl. Add the tuna puree, celery, and onion to the cream cheese blend, mixing thoroughly. Serve with crackers or fresh bread.

Serves 4.

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