

THE HARVEST CAFÉ & ABUNDANT HARVEST CATERERS

Chef Joe Brown is the new Culinary Director and Executive Chef at the Harvest Café & Abundant Harvest Cater at Bethany Baptist Church. Chef Joe has 39 Years of culinary Experience and 18 years as the owner of Mélange Cafe in Cherry Hill and Haddonfield NJ.



His recipes have been featured in *Cooking Light*, *Culinary Trends*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *Ebony*, *Black Enterprise*, *Health Quest*, *American Visions*, and regional newspapers and magazines. He has appeared on the National Geographic Channel, Food Network and the Discovery Network. He has also self-published a cookbook called Chef Joe Brown's Mélange Café Cook Book.

Joe Brown

Joe Brown was born to feed a crowd. The youngest of ten children, Joe learned to cook at his mother's side at an early age. His father died when he was eight, having Joe's mother raised the large family by herself. Joe especially liked helping in the kitchen. "My mother was from Tennessee. She really knew how to cook," says Brown, "and there were **a lot** of people to cook for. If I wanted something, I'd make it myself. After a while I realized that I really enjoyed cooking for everyone."

Watching his older siblings gain success in college and the work world inspired him to want his own business. Although his first venture was a Kool-Aid stand, he did not think that business would be a restaurant. However, a summer job after high school graduation changed all that. Joe started working as a dishwasher at a seafood restaurant, and — pardon the pun — he was hooked. "Although I hadn't initially considered cooking as a career, I really loved it, and I had the natural skills — hand control, stamina, a love of food." Those skills paid off, and Brown eventually became the first African-American chef at the restaurant. Still, he felt the need for formal training. "Without education, a cook isn't a chef but a piece of equipment in the kitchen. I wanted more than that."

So the ambitious Brown enrolled in The Restaurant School in Philadelphia. While in school, he continued working at the seafood restaurant and took on two part-time jobs, one of which was at Landmark Inn. There he met his mentors: the owner of the Inn who encouraged his dream of owning his own business; and Elijah Dawes, an African-American executive chef who taught him a great deal about professionalism.

After graduation, Brown began to seriously plan for his own restaurant. He knew what he wanted: a place that would provide exceptional meals at moderate prices to all ethnic groups. He just was uncertain about the cuisine. Then an "Eureka!" moment happened. Brown and his wife Robin took a trip to New Orleans. Joe immediately fell in love with the melting pot cuisine of the Big Easy, the Southern spirit of hospitality, and the energy that buzzed throughout the city. He opened Mélange Café in 1995. By combining what he loved — sophisticated Creole sauces; rustic Cajun dishes; his Southern heritage — with what he knew — modern Italian cooking; classical techniques; a mastery of seafood — his Louisiana-Italian fusion cuisine was born.

Since then Brown has had tremendous success and has received much applause from customers and critics alike. Mélange Cafe has a large, loyal client base, and it buzzes with Big Easy spirit. Joe hopes the restaurant will serve as a training ground for others who are interested in food service careers. “I hope to be able to show others, especially minorities and people who might not want to pursue college, how to be successful in this field,” says Brown. In 1998, Brown was named “Entrepreneur of the Year” by the Upsilon Omega Chapter of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority for his leadership and commitment to community service.

Not one to rest on his laurels, Brown plans to further explore the possibilities of Louisiana-Italian fusion cuisine, start a culinary scholarship foundation, and perhaps start a culinary school. After all ... it’s what he was born to do.

Elder Samuel R Paraham

Elder Samuel Paraham currently serves as Director of Volunteer Ministries at Bethany Baptist Church. He is also an Officer on the Board of Generations, Inc. working with the business of the Culinary Department.

He also serves on the Ministers Council, teaches Vacation Bible School, and is a Worship Leader. In addition to his day to day duties, he teaches the following courses at AHBI: Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, Moving in the Gifts, and Doctrine of God.

Elder (as he is affectionally called) was born and attended school in the South Jersey area. He was preaching at the age of 13 at the Youth Days and Joy Nights. He received his Bachelor and Master's degrees from Temple University and is a licensed Social Worker. His theological training came from the Church of Fellowship in Faith Bible Institute and the Philadelphia Bible Institute.

Elder Paraham joined Bethany where he serves as the Director of Volunteer Ministries, where he serves and volunteers at the Harvest Café. Elder started to develop his culinary values through his Chef Father, not to mention "Mama's cooking". He directs the Culinary output on Mondays and works with His volunteers on Wednesdays, Sundays, and on other special occasions.



Haidy Finger



Haidy Finger was inspired by her grandmother Mahitibel Gorre. She spent many hours with Mahitibel in the kitchen baking and cooking for many events. As an adult, she decided to work in several restaurants as a server and soon realized that she wanted to cook and create food.

Haidy entered the Culinary Arts program at Camden County Technical Institute. After completion, she worked at Virtuous Women Bakery training to blend the awesome, different flavors of the soul. After two years of baking, she decided to broaden her love

for food and accepted a position at Fresh Fields as a Cook. After the company discovered her true talents, she was soon promoted to the position of Catering Sous Chef in Philadelphia area. She increased sales by aggressively seeking out new clients in the Philadelphia area.

Haidy, as the new Sous Chef, participated in the opening of several new Wholefoods Markets in Atlanta, Washington, Georgetown, and hometown Philadelphia.

Haidy came to Abundant Harvest Catering under the leadership of Chef Kendall Selby allowing her to fine tune her skills as a Sous Chef. She currently works with the new Director/Executive Chef Joe Brown at Abundant Harvest Catering continuing to expand her skills as a Chef.