

# Everyone's wish: A personal chef service

Melissa Wieczorek recently started her own personal chef service to give clients' more time to spend with family and friends, while also providing them with fresh, healthy meals.

By STACY STANISLAW  
FOCUS ON NEWTOWN

With the increasing emphasis on working long hours, family values and health, more and more people are having trouble finding time to focus on all three aspects of their lives.

That's why Melissa Wieczorek recently opened her own personal chef service, A la Maison.

"My business is perfect for busy dual-income households where both people work," Wieczorek said. "I know how hard it is to get a fresh, healthy meal on the table every night, and I wanted to help make that possible for busy families."

Before starting A la Maison, which means "at home" in French, Wieczorek had a career marketing and managing business education programs, which she left behind to pursue her true passion.

"My real passion has always been cooking. [Before] in my spare time, I was always in the kitchen," Wieczorek said. "I've been cooking since I was six years old... But my true inspiration [to open the business] came from my travels

in Europe. My husband is from France, so I've spent a lot of time there visiting his family. I would always be at their heads, trying to learn how they cooked these fresh meals everyday."

So, in January, Wieczorek, a member of the Personal Chef Network, an organization that gives training and support to personal chefs, started her own personal chef service out of her Newtown Township home.

Now Wieczorek travels to her clients' homes during the day to prepare meals for each client.

"I cook in my clients home, and I bring all of my equipment with me," Wieczorek said. "I do the grocery shopping the day I cook so that all the ingredients are fresh. Then, I cook the meals and store them in either the refrigerator or freezer for the clients to reheat at their convenience."

Before she starts cooking for a client, however, Wieczorek explained that she holds an interview with clients to "assess their culinary needs, tastes and preferences."

She also tours the kitchen to get an idea of what equipment she will need to bring to the client's home. After the initial interview, Wieczorek sends the client a sample menu based on information she collects during the interview.

"For the most part, people are really just looking for the type of food you can eat everyday," Wieczorek said. "I make anything from comfort food to elegant, fine dining dishes, depending on the client. My menus are really very flexible; the key word here is 'personal.'"

Typically, Wieczorek says her clientele are busy families and working professionals, although this service appeals to those trying to eat healthier or who are recovering from an illness.

"...This is also an excellent service for people who are trying to eat healthier and control their diet or for those recovering from illness or injury," Wieczorek said. "Plus, it's really

not as expensive as people initially expect. I charge a fee for my services and for the cost of the groceries, but it really costs a little less than dining out, but a little more than cooking yourself..."

Eventually, Wieczorek hopes to open a commercial kitchen with a storefront in Newtown, where she will prepare meals and hold cooking classes to give people the opportunity to learn to prepare fresh, healthy meals.

"Overall, my main goal is to help bring dining back to the home," the personal chef said. "I want to bring fresh ideas as well as fresh food to the table... I think [cooking] is a valuable skill people should have, but I also want to save people time so they can be with their families."

For more information about A la Maison, contact Melissa Wieczorek at 215-919-9085 or [chefmelissa@amn.com](mailto:chefmelissa@amn.com).

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Melissa Wieczorek, owner of A la Maison, a personal chef service, cuts potatoes and carrots for a soup. Wieczorek often serves the soup with her favorite Poulet Provençal (left), a whole tender chicken seasoned with Herbs de Provence.



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