



PATRICK COLLARD / Staff
Ray Baez, left, started his culinary career in the kitchen at Stax Omega on Orchard Park Drive, where his dad J.R., right, has been chef since 1994. Now Ray is a Stax Omega chef, too, at the restaurant's Beacon Drive location.

Father, son find synergy in Omega kitchens

By John C. Stevenson
STAFF WRITER
jstevens@greenvillenews.com

No matter which Stax Omega restaurant you visit, there's going to be a Baez in the kitchen.

If you're on Orchard Park Drive, the chef overseeing kitchen operations is J.R. Baez, a veteran who has been in commercial kitchens since 1981.

If, on the other hand, you're dining at the Beacon Drive location, J.R.'s son Ray will be the one ensuring your meal's quality.

But the family connections go even deeper. You could even say that Ray, 23, is a byproduct of J.R.'s culinary career. The elder Baez, 44, started cooking professionally in 1981, under Bob Marone, the chef-owner of an Italian restaurant in Florida.

"Actually, I met (Ray's) grandfather (Marone) — he was the owner of a restaurant, and I started working for him and he pretty much showed me a lot," J.R. said. "That's how I met (Ray's) mom — that's where he came from."

In 1994, J.R. moved to Greenville and began his career at Stax Omega on Orchard Park Road, where he's been ever since. Often, his young son Ray would accompany him to work and help out.

"He's been in and out of kitchens since he was 7," J.R. said of Ray. "I'd bring him in

Elegant dining, pure and simple

Noted chef puts local ingredients to good use during benefit

By John C. Stevenson
STAFF WRITER
jstevens@greenvillenews.com

Chef Michel Nischan has come full circle in his cooking career.

Nischan once cooked full-on fine cuisine in the traditional sense, or as he puts it, "floating on foie gras and bathing in butter." But that began to change in 1994, when

WANT TO GO?

What: "A Pure and Simple Evening with Michel Nischan at CityRange"

When: 7 p.m. Monday

Where: CityRange Steakhouse Grill, 615 Haywood Road

Cost: \$200 per ticket, with 50 percent going to the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation

Details: Seating is limited; tickets may be purchased by calling 778-0276

Nischan's 5-year-old son was diagnosed with Type 1, or juvenile, diabetes.

Now the chef, author of "Homegrown Pure and Simple: Great Healthy Food from Garden to Table" (Chronicle Books, 2005) and "Taste Pure and Simple: Irresistible Recipes for Good Food and Good Health" (Chronicle Books, 2003), creates dishes featuring locally grown ingredients from small, sustainable farms. He also focuses on the use of whole, natural foods in heirloom

See **DINING** on page 3D



Photo courtesy of MICHEL NISCHAN
Chef Michel Nischan will prepare some healthy fare, like the chopped salad on left, at CityRange Steakhouse Grill Monday. Half of the proceeds will benefit the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation.