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## Fine-dining restaurateur's new concept feeds the poor, provides job training



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Spend five minutes with chef and restaurateur [Jim Noble](#) and you'll quickly learn that five-star ratings and filled reservation books don't mean much to him. Restoring hope for those in search of a better life is worth far more to Noble than restaurant accolades or great reviews – even though he has walls filled with each.

Noble, 58, a lifelong North Carolina restaurateur, operates several fine dining establishments in and around Charlotte. He founded the The King's Kitchen restaurant in downtown Charlotte in 2010 as a way to realize a lifelong passion he shared with his wife, Karen.

The restaurant ministers to area homeless by addressing some of their basic needs. Meals, job training and the promise of steady employment coupled with faith-based life-skills development are all areas that can be found here.

The King's Kitchen partners with social service agencies, in-residence rehab facilities, housing services, and area ministries to advocate for those who find themselves in need due to a variety of life's hardships.

### Outreach grew from radio ministry

"Our work grew from a radio ministry my wife and I had in 1998 called Restoration World Ministries," said Noble, whose fine-dining establishments such as Noble's Grille in Winston-Salem and two Charlotte locations of Rooster's Wood Fired Kitchen consistently generate critical acclaim and loyal patronage. "We looked to feed homeless and those in need right in our own communities, first around the holidays of Thanksgiving and Christmas, and then it continued to grow."

When Hurricane Katrina forced hundreds of New Orleans' displaced residents to relocate to Charlotte and temporarily live in the old Charlotte Coliseum in 2005, it was Noble along with

Bojangles Restaurants and others who took it upon themselves to support the Red Cross and feed Charlotte's new residents for weeks.

"Success is a journey," said Noble, "You are truly successful if you have held significance in the lives of others. I had a vision for what King's Kitchen could offer and I looked to the community for support. Charlotte is a very benevolent city and filled with a giving spirit."

Noble said he opened The King's Kitchen debt free in 2010 thanks to the generosity of many corporate and individual partners and donors.

In its first year of operation, The King's Kitchen donated more than \$50,000 to feeding the poor. The restaurant currently works in partnership with Hoskins Park Ministry, an area residential ministry, in feeding people weekly. Over its four years of operation, The King's Kitchen has fed thousand of hungry and homeless and touched the lives of many through their job training program and willingness to work with those who may have a blemished past. It also holds daily Bible study classes and church services on Sundays.

### **Southern comfort food**

Patrons who visit King's Kitchen are immediately converted to the signature Southern-style comfort food prominently featured on the menu. Corporate chieftains and white-shirted bankers sit side-by-side with construction workers and the local cop on the beat. They are all there for favorites, such as Aunt Beaut's Cast Iron Fried Chicken, Grilled Meatloaf, Stone Fisheries Fried Flounder, and the restaurant's famous Pimento Cheese spread. The breakfast, lunch and dinner spot has been a magnet for locals since their doors have opened, and servicing the community through their outreach is icing on the cake.

[Walter Peatross](#), 52, discovered the job training program at The King's Kitchen through Hoskins Ministry, where he is developing the life skills needed to keep free from a crack cocaine addiction that crippled his life for more than 39 years.

"I've been here in training for four months and it is changing my life in such a positive way," said Peatross, who said he'd been drug free for more than eight months. "To have the opportunity to rebuild my life, to not be judged by others, and learn the restaurant business from the front of the house to the back is truly a blessing."

For Noble, juggling the various balls he has in the air in terms of managing his restaurant business and helping his neighbors is something he seems to take in stride.

"I never go to bed at night thinking I've got this thing whipped," said Noble, referring to the scope of the homeless problem. "But I do gain a sense of peace in my heart knowing that God is working through us in ways that allow us to transform lives."

Michael Solender is a journalist from the Charlotte, N.C., area.