

ENTERTAINMENT

Food Network judge to attend secret supper here

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Dishcrawl wants to let you in on a secret.

This year the weekend of the summer solstice will include more than the longest day of the year. June 22 will be the first of Greenville's Secret Suppers. Secret Suppers are six-course meals prepared by notable chefs for a small, VIP group as part of Dishcrawl's mission to "re-imagine the way people think about food, drink, and their community."

Simon Majumdar, writer, food critic and Food Network judge, will be a special guest at the first Secret Supper.

June 4 marks the 10-year anniversary of the death of Majumdar's mother. Her death, coupled with stress of working in book publishing, brought him to the point of a mid-life crisis at the age of 40. He turned to cooking for solace, a tradition he always shared with his mother.

"Cooking has been my salvation," he said. "It's always been the most important thing."

While in the kitchen, Majumdar opened a book and found a list of things he hoped to accomplish by his 40th birthday. The list ended with, "Go everywhere, eat everything."

Majumdar handed in his resignation and put his life savings toward a trip around the world. His journey, which brought him to more than 100 cities in 30 different countries, is documented in the pages of "Eat My Globe," the best-seller that brought Majumdar to prominence in the food industry.

"I didn't know I was going to write a book," he said. "It was a journey to save my soul, really."

So when Dishcrawl Greenville's Will Morin contacted Majumdar on Twitter about Greenville's Secret Supper, Majumdar responded to the invitation.

"I have the great belief that you should go and do the interesting things people invite you to do," he said. "I know I'm often seen as the mean judge on TV, but I try to be responsive and approachable."

"Progressive dinners" by Dishcrawl have been happening in Greenville since September last year, but instead of traveling to several restaurants for different courses, Secret Suppers will bring the variety to one locations—a secret that isn't revealed until 48 hours before the dinner.

Courses at June's dinner will be prepared by Executive Chef Alex Castro from Larkin's On the River, Larkin's Corporate Chef Bob Munnich, and Chef Matt Burton of Grill Marks. Tickets for the dinner are \$79 without wine pairing, or \$109 with sustainable wines from Italy and Jackson Family Estates. Less than 100 tickets will be sold, and they can be purchased on Dishcrawl's website.

Morin said the menu's six courses will be prepared with fresh, local ingredients, like the garlic studded pork loin made with Cheshire White pork provided by Heritage Farms. Another course will include Naked Pasta's ravioli in a Madeira wine redux.

"The quality of the food is as good as any high-end restaurant in town and the money is going toward an amazing idea," Morin said.

The proceeds from the Secret Supper will be going toward the rooftop farm Morin has designed with Mill Village Farms. They are hoping to raise \$50,000 this summer for special equipment. The farm will utilize aeroponic tower gardens in a space donated by the Hughes Development Corp., atop the empty Windstream building at 101 North Main St.

Morin and MVF hope to grow produce that can be sold to local restaurants, on MVF's Good-to-Go mobile truck, and at the TD Saturday Market downtown.

"That's one of the biggest wins we could ever have," Morin said. "Someone asking, 'Where's your farm located?' and we can just point up."

Although the location for the Secret Supper is still a mystery, the theme of the dinner is a "Farmer's Table" and Morin said it will be "very rustic."

“You’ll be dining around goats and peacocks,” he said. “With white linen tablecloths, there’s going to be some great juxtaposition.”

Majumdar and his wife, whom he met in Brazil during his trip around the globe, hope to see as much of Greenville as possible before they leave.

“I don’t want to smile for a few pictures and go,” he said. “I want to really get to know people. I want to make Greenville part of my extended American family.”

Majumdar is working on a third book, following “Eat My Globe” and “Eating for Britain,” called “Fed, White and Blue” about his journey to become an American citizen. Majumdar is hoping to be granted citizenship within the next few months. Greenville could potentially be a topic of discussion in his writing.

“I’m always looking for great ideas and connections. I treat life as an open book,” he said. “This is my first trip to Greenville but I hope it won’t be my last.”

This won’t be the last Secret Supper in Greenville, either. Morin is already working on a second, the theme of which is “Four Centuries in the Making: A History of Southern Cuisine from the Mid-1700s Through the Star Trek Age.”

“I’m thinking it will start with something like rabbit on a stick and end with molecular gastronomy, some kind of really futuristic course,” Morin said. “It’s going to be a cool way to explore the history of food.”

YOU CAN GO:

Secret Supper

Sun., June 22

Tickets are \$79

without drink

pairing, \$109 with

dishcrawl.com

/community/9068

The meeting place
will be revealed
48 hours prior
to the event.