

# CHEF JESSICA WRIGHT



**COMPANY:** Jessica Wright, LLC

**EDUCATION:** Art Institute of Colorado, B.S. in culinary management, summa cum laude.

**HONORS:** Two employee of month/year awards.

**T**he thing to remember about Jessica Wright is that she's calm and consistent under pressure.

It was something she learned early on as the oldest of three kids growing up in Savannah, Ga.

"I always had to be the responsible one. Growing up watching my younger brothers made me assess all the angles in a situation and evaluate them calmly," Jessica explains. "I quickly learned my brothers' mood would feed off of my mood; if I was stressed or anxious they'd become the same way. So I learned to keep calm so they wouldn't freak out."

Jessica says it's a demeanor that's proven helpful in the kitchen. "I know that's where things can go from relatively calm to crazy and chaotic in a few seconds."

She's done plenty to prepare for kitchen chaos. After earning degrees from the Florida Culinary Institute and the Art Institute of Colorado, she worked for the Modern Mexican Restaurants Corporation where she handled ordering, inventory, food cost and staff training for multiple restaurants along with working as a sous chef and performing all the responsibilities that came with that title. She then moved on to become a senior manager for two locations of Freshii, a Canadian restaurant franchise that serves burritos and wraps, soups, salads and frozen yogurt.

As for food, it's all about comfort for Jessica.

"I grew up in Savannah, Ga. where my mom cooked us very southern food like fried chicken with mashed potatoes, white gravy and corn and it was oh so delicious," she says.

Her best food-related memories center on her mom taking her and her brothers out to the piers around the marshes where she'd buy up a couple pounds of fresh shrimp.

"My brothers and I would spend the afternoon popping the heads off the shrimp, peeling and cleaning them while my mom got everything else ready for the shrimp boil. The house smelled amazing and those are some of my fondest memories of childhood."

Jessica admits she didn't realize in those days just how important food would become to her.

"I didn't know it as a child, but watching my mom cook and helping her out was ingraining a deep and beloved trait of appreciating food and how it can truly nourish people. I knew that once I went the culinary route, I wanted to translate this love and appreciation of food to children. The food we eat is fascinating and perfectly suited for a child's inquisitive mind; there is no reason to not engage them in the beauty of real food."

What Jessica says she really loves in her work today as a chef is that moment when she knows she's created a change in someone.

"It doesn't have to be this huge change...it can be subtle like when a child ponders the choice between a plum or a peach, or when someone decides to change and cut back on sodas. The most beautiful part is when I see someone I've taught who's felt unappreciated start believing in themselves again and realize that they can truly make a difference in a child's life." 🍓



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