

Meals For the Homebound

Elmsford Caterer Uses His Top Chefs to Help Fortify Seniors

By Sam Barron

For many homebound seniors in Westchester, getting their food can be a hassle.

Corporate caterer Paul Ghiron is attempting to change that.

Ghiron, who runs The Crystal Spoon, an Elmsford-based catering service, launched Top Chef Meals last month, a home delivery food service that accommodates seniors, the disabled or anyone who needs a delicious, nutritious and affordable meal brought to them.

"There are thousands of homebound people living right here in our community," said Ghiron, a Pleasantville resident. "I started this service to offer something new, fresh, authentic and most of all, flavorful."

As someone with an elderly parent, Ghiron became concerned about the needs of seniors. He started working on the project in Nov. 2009, trying to figure out how to properly package the meals that would be appealing and easily heated in the microwave or conventional oven.

He researched different types of containers and eventually found a paper-based container that can be used in a regular oven or microwave and is also completely biodegradable.

Ghiron's goal is simple: To help feed the hungry. Despite Westchester's

reputation for affluence, hunger persists in the county.

"All these seniors are going hungry," Ghiron said. "If they buy some meals and stick them in the freezer, then they wouldn't go hungry."

Another Top Chef feature is choice; customers can select their own meals, which includes an entree and two side dishes, from a variety of options. For \$5.50 a meal, entrees include chicken francaise, meatballs and roast turkey breast with gravy. Mashed potatoes, ratatouille and glazed carrots are among the side dishes. Discounts are provided to customers who order multiple meals, and if customers order at least \$150 worth of meals, then shipping is free.

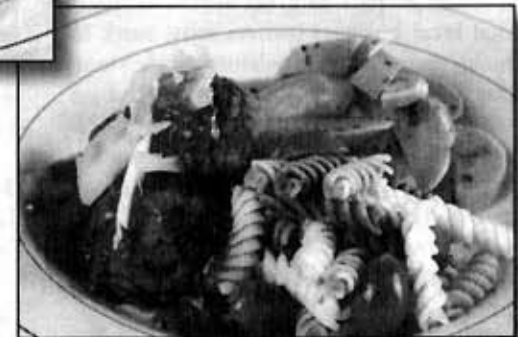
"Everything heats up at the same time," Ghiron said. "There's a little science to that. We had to work through all those issues and different entrees."

Once he got the meal preparation part of the project down, Ghiron then pitched his idea to the public. He sent his salespeople out to nursing homes and senior facilities to drum up interest by offering free samples. While the product was initially designed to be geared toward seniors, Ghiron has attracted interest from people from all walks of life.

"Everyone is very excited about the



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE CRYSTAL SPOON



The Crystal Spoon, an Elmsford caterer, is providing affordable and nutritious meals to the homebound throughout Westchester.

product," he said. "We send free samples and everyone loves it."

The meals are prepared without salt and have low sodium content. The Top Chef Web site lists the calorie content of each dish. The meals are made by Ghiron's chefs and are made to order. Currently, Ghiron and his chefs are making 10 meals daily and eventually hope to increase that to serve 700 customers. He said he usually has seven trucks out on the road on weekdays, preparing the food at his 4,000-square-foot kitchen in Elmsford with seven chefs on staff.

"It's the equivalent of going to a three-

star restaurant," Ghiron said about his food.

When he's not delivering meals, Ghiron runs The Crystal Spoon, ranked by Westchester Business Journal as the best corporate caterer in the county. Besides corporate events, Ghiron also provides food for detention facilities.

Customers can order meals by phone. Currently delivery is only available in Westchester County.

For more information call 914-372-7080, e-mail meal@thecrystalspoon.com or visit www.topchefmeals.com.