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Kane County Magazine

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FUN IN THE SUN

Consider a hat for a playful,
trendy accessory to dress
up any look

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BLOSSOMING BUSINESS

"I love teaching and sharing
my craft," says the owner of
Farmdog Flowers

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CHIC & Stylish

8 SPRING OUTFITS, WHETHER YOU'RE HEADED TO YOGA OR OUT TO DINNER

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STILETTOS AND SAUTE PANS

CAUGHT BETWEEN THE CROSSFIRE OF FASHION AND FUNCTION

With Katie McCall, owner of Two Wild Seeds bakery

If I told you the food industry was glamorous, I'd be lying.

The perfect hair, manicured nails, crisp clothing and gleaming countertops often portrayed in magazines and on TV are a far cry from the literal blood, sweat and tears even a single day in a professional kitchen can summon.

Looking back, I never could have imagined that my 20-something self — a journalism grad in pursuit of a magazine writing career — would end up swapping stilettos for kitchen clogs to attend culinary school and later work for some of Chicago's top restaurants.

It all started in 2009 when I moved to the city after graduating from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. I spent the first year gallivanting around town in heels, latte in hand,

hailing cabs. I covered local fashion shows, rubbed elbows with celebrity chefs at restaurant openings and, naturally, fell victim to the fabulous shopping. In essence, I was (naively) living the Carrie Bradshaw dream every young, female writer craved.

But after a year of freelancing and working retail jobs to pay the rent, all I had to show was a handful of published articles and an overflowing closet. Seeking more structure, I scrolled through job listings on the website of Food & Wine Magazine and, shockingly, met every qualification for an associate writing position — albeit one: a culinary degree.

It was an unequivocal lightbulb moment. My passion for food ran deep, so with a leap of faith and my parents' blessing, I enrolled in Le Cordon

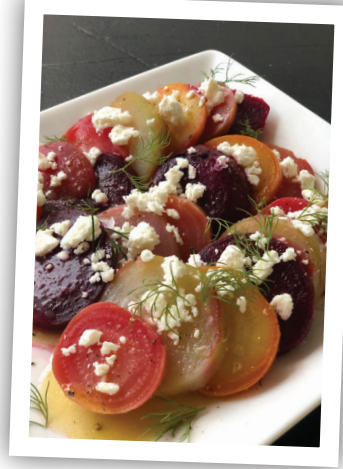
Bleu's two-year culinary program. On the first day of class, I carefully ironed and stepped into my new uniform...

Flowing skirts and tailored pants were now replaced with an oversized chef's jacket, traditional "cravat" (or necktie) and one-size-fits-all pair of blue and white checkered pants that relentlessly ballooned at the crotch. My long hair was pulled into a tight bun beneath a beanie-style hat. My new handbag was a zippered knife kit, and chunky black clogs kicked my strappy heels to the back of the closet.

For weeks, I felt devoid of my femininity. Fashion had always been a form of self-expression, and now, this Michelin-man uniform was on repeat. Coupled with grueling 16-hour schedules (kitchen job by day, culinary school by night), I was over-

ROASTED BEET SALAD

Not only is this recipe nutritious, simple to prepare, full of flavor and beautiful — but it's also a nod to my first professional cooking "injury." I had just started culinary school and while pulling a pan of roasted beets from the oven, I singed the inside of my forearm on the screaming hot sheet tray. Twelve years later, I can't prepare beets without flashbacks of this silly story — and still have the scar to prove it!



SERVES 4

- 6-8 medium to large fresh beets (red, purple, golden, striped, etc.)
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 teaspoon water
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Feta cheese
- Fresh dill

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Scrub the beets clean and wrap each one in aluminum foil. Place them on a baking sheet and bake 40 minutes to 1 hour, or until a sharp knife can be inserted into the beets without resistance. Tip: If you have drastically different sized beets, consider using two baking sheets to separate the smaller and larger ones, as they'll cook at different rates.

Once the beets are fully cooked and have cooled slightly, peel off the skins and rinse with cool water. Slice each beet with a sharp knife and arrange on a platter, overlapping colors for a stunning presentation.

In a small bowl, combine the mustard, lemon juice, honey, olive oil, water, and salt and pepper to taste. Whisk until emulsified and set aside.

Top the sliced beets with crumbled feta cheese and evenly drizzle the vinaigrette. Garnish with chopped fresh dill and a sprinkle of freshly ground black pepper.

Serve immediately, or cover and chill in the refrigerator to marinate. Enjoy!



caffeinated, underpaid, exhausted and perpetually smelled of raw fish and butter. My once smooth hands grew cracked and dry; my arms now housed a sea of cuts and burns. At times, I barely recognized myself.

But as the months clicked on, I learned that how I looked was the least of my concerns; what mattered most was that I arrived at class 15 minutes early, prepped my station, sharpened my knives and worked hard — really hard.

For the first time ever, I felt a true sense of pride in my work, and oddly, it took stripping away the bells and whistles I'd previously valued to reveal

a more authentic version of myself. My newfound skills and determination pushed me to the top of my class and ultimately landed me jobs working alongside some of the city's best chefs. I felt invigorated and like a weight had finally lifted.

Today, I couldn't be prouder of my battle wounds; and as for my clothes, most of them have been boxed, donated, sold or given away to friends and family. And while I'm most comfortable in ripped jeans, a soft V-neck tee, apron, gym shoes and colorful headband — sometimes a girl just needs a pair of red pumps to get the job done.

■ Katie McCall is a bona fide Midwestern girl. Raised on four acres of rural property in Yorkville, she was taught to respect nature and all of its bounty. From foraging morel mushrooms in the woods to picking wild raspberries for homemade jam, Katie feels most at home when in nature and preparing food for others. When she's not running the downtown St. Charles bakery Two Wild Seeds, she can be found nose-deep in cookbooks, exploring the outdoors with her family — and eating ... always eating. Photo by Victoria C Photos.

