





# The Chef Next Door

THE GREENBRIER'S EXECUTIVE CHEF  
RICHARD ROSENDALE

**IF YOU GOOGLE THE NAME RICHARD ROSENDALE YOU'LL FIND AN IMPRESSIVE TROVE OF ARTICLES ABOUT THE 40 MEDALS AND AWARDS THE GREENBRIER'S EXECUTIVE CHEF HAS GARNERED IN HIS RELATIVELY BRIEF CULINARY CAREER.**

You'll read that he recently became one of only 66 Certified Master Chefs in the country, that in 2005 he was the youngest member of Culinary Team USA participating in the "Culinary Olympics" in Germany, and that he captained the team in 2008 and brought home 3 gold medals and one silver. You can read about his three restaurants in Columbus, Ohio, and his decision to return to The Greenbrier. You can even watch him demonstrate how to make microwave brioche on YouTube.

But questions linger. In an age when cooking has become a competitive spectator sport, how did this 35-year-old rise to become one of the country's top chefs? What brought him to the Greenbrier Valley? How is he putting his own culinary stamp on a 200-year-old resort with a storied past?

When you meet Rich Rosendale the first thing you notice is that he doesn't fit the temperamental chef stereotype. He's warm, articulate and engaging, the kind of guy you'd like to have for a next-door neighbor. When he talks about growing up in Union-

STORY BY: GREG JOHNSON  
PHOTOS BY: BLACKBIRD STUDIO

Left: Greenbrier Executive Chef Rich Rosendale photographed in the resort's famed Main Dining Room.

town, Pennsylvania, you realize he's a small town boy made good, who was lucky to find an occupation he loves passionately.

"My grandmothers nurtured my love of food," he remembers. "One was German and one was Italian, and they were both great cooks. I realized at a young age that I really liked to eat. I took Mrs. Kilgore's Home Economics class at Uniontown High School. Chili was probably the first thing I ever made. When I was young I moved from one thing to the next and never stuck with anything – baseball, drums, bass guitar. Cooking was the one thing that held my interest. When I started thinking about a career I thought about going in the military, but instead I decided



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Above: Chef Rosendale, one of only 66 Master Chefs in the country, in the kitchen; Bottom: Rosendale exhibits some of his prized tools of the trade.

to enroll in the culinary program at Westmoreland County Community College in Youngwood.” With an embarrassed look he adds, “I’m kind of a local celebrity there now. They just named a scholarship after me, which I really wasn’t expecting.”

He prefers to see his competitive nature as perseverance, and he credits his mother with instilling this trait in him. “My dad left when we were very young and my mother did a great job raising my sister and me on her own. Our house burned down on Christmas Day when I was five, and we lost everything. My mother was a high school English teacher, and she persevered though all this adversity. Her friends got us clothes and groceries and a car to use, and paid our rent for three months to get us back on our feet. All my life I’ve been motivated by my mother’s example. She’s an amazing person.”

The other woman who has been influential in his life is his wife Laura. “We met in seventh grade and we were high school sweethearts. Chefs make great sacrifices and I’ve had a roller coaster life, but she’s stayed with me. I couldn’t have done what I’ve done without her. When I was running Rosendale’s and my other two restaurants in Columbus I was barely ever home. I’m lucky to have such an understanding partner. Our son is the best thing that ever happened to me. He made me stop and think about what’s really important in life.”

Rich and Laura and 2-year-old Lawrence live north of Lewisburg in the community of Maxwellton. “I enjoy cooking for them on my days off,” Rich says. And what does a Master Chef make

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Rosendale preps scallions for an evening's menu.

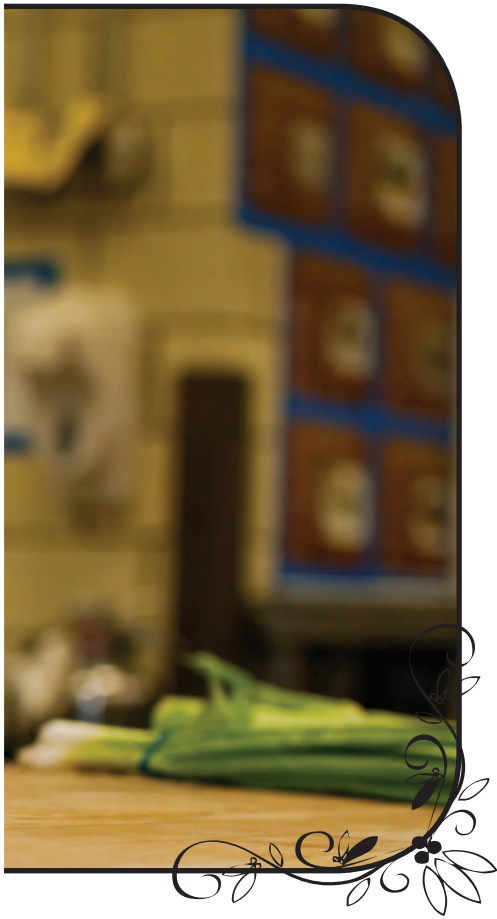
at home? “Comfort food. I made chicken soup with dumplings for lunch yesterday, and shrimp fajitas and a 3-bean casserole for dinner. Laura loves French Onion soup, so I make that. The other day I surprised her with brownies.” And how does he get a fickle 2-year-old eater to cooperate? “I disguise the things he doesn’t like in the things he does. I put cauliflower in his scrambled eggs.”

Rich originally worked at The Greenbrier from 2001–2005 as the Chef de Cuisine in the Tavern Room Restaurant, which received numerous accolades during his tenure. He was overseeing his restaurants in Columbus in 2009 when he received a phone call from The Greenbrier inviting him to apply for the Executive Chef position. His businesses were suffering from the economic downturn. “I could see that people weren’t going to be spending money the next five years the way they were spending it the last twenty. We had a premium product and I’d embarked on a very risky venture. I had \$13,000 monthly rent and a \$21,000 payroll, and I was working all the time. I might have been able to

weather the storm, but I knew I wasn’t going to prosper. The opportunity to return to The Greenbrier came at the perfect time. It was an easy decision.”

His restaurant ownership had prepared him for the whirlwind he was about to experience. “The Greenbrier was undergoing more change in a year than it had in the previous 200 years. They were rethinking the food service and developing new restaurants. I had to work with architects on kitchen design. I had to develop menus. I had to recruit staff. I’d just gone through all this at my own places.” With Jim Justice’s purchase of the historic property, things were moving at breathtaking speed. “Three days after I started I was in Los Angeles, going around to steakhouses with Jerry and Karen West, trying to help them decide what they wanted Prime 44 to be. Thirty days later we were open. We use very expensive, premium products. Our side dishes come in generous portions, and we have fun appetizers like lobster popcorn.”

All the resort’s new eateries are up and running, including The Forum, which serves



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Rosendale with his wife Laura and two-year-old son, Lawrence. Photo by Bob Brown Photography.

## *Chef Rosendale's Yeast Rolls*

*These taste like my grandma's rolls,  
and they make the house smell wonderful.*

6 cups	bread flour
6 Tbsp	sugar
1 ¼ tsp	salt
2 ½ pkgs	yeast
2 ¼ cups	warm water
¼ cup	vegetable oil
2 Tbsp	butter
1 cup	diced cheese (optional) Cheddar or your favorite kind

1. Sift flour, 5 tablespoons sugar, and salt together in mixing bowl.
2. Ferment 1 tablespoon sugar, yeast and warm water for 10 minutes.
3. Add the oil to the yeast mixture.
4. Add yeast/oil mixture to flour, sugar and salt. Knead dough for about 12 minutes. Place dough in mixing bowl covered with a towel. Set off to the side in a warm place.
5. Rest until doubled in size. Punch down and shape into desired shapes. I like to roll into small balls and place in a greased cast iron pan. Let it rise again in the pan until doubled in volume. Bake at 375 degrees in pre-heated oven until golden brown. Remove from the oven and use the 2 tablespoons of butter to melt over the warm rolls. Serve and enjoy.



classic Italian cuisine, and In-Fusion, an Asian restaurant and sushi bar in the new casino. When you add to this mix a large Main Dining Room, Draper's, Café Carleton, Sam Snead's at the Golf Club, and the Tree Tops Café at the outdoor pool, you start to see the scope of the food service operation Chef Rosendale oversees.

"I don't create all the menus," he says. "I help the other chefs develop them. I feel it's my role to bring out the best in the people around me. I really want to see them succeed. I see myself as a mentor, a motivator and an organizer."

One of the high points of Chef Rosendale's illustrious career came in November, when he received his Certified Master Chef designation from the American Culinary Association. "The exam took eight days. I knew it was going to be tough, but it was even harder than I thought. People usually spend a year preparing for it, but I only had two months because of all the other things I'd been doing. I decided not to worry about the daily points they award you and just focus on the food. I didn't even look at my report cards. I just folded them and put them in my pocket. I'm usually super-prepared, but I went into this more spontaneously. I just cooked the best food I possibly could every day. It was probably some of the best I've made in my career."

The chef's future plans are straightforward. "Our guests expect everything in our restaurants to be extraordinary. My goal is to exceed their expectations. I'm really proud of this hotel. They've invested a lot in me over the years, and I want to be an ambassador for The Greenbrier."



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- Liam's Fancy - Sunday, Feb. 20
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\*Greenbrier Celtic Society Meeting: 5pm on the Third Sunday of the Month at the Irish Pub.

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