



Food Forager Paul McComiskey: A True Locavore



Chef Paul McComiskey educating guests in Ocean House's Center for Wine and Culinary Arts. Ocean House

Chef Paul McComiskey began his culinary career at just fourteen when he took a job as a dishwasher at a summer camp. There were some days when they chef threw lunch together quickly by using canned vegetables and other processed ingredients, but there were others when he took the time to make meals with fresh produce and whole foods, and McComiskey noticed a marked different in the campers and the overall feel of the environment. "The kids were in a better mood and the whole community flourished," he recalled.

Thus began a whirlwind career in which McComiskey had taken every food-related opportunity that crossed his path, including in diners, pizza kitchens, casinos, fish markets, small cafes, and even a slaughterhouse, all by the time he was 21. This lead to him securing his first position as a chef, leading the kitchen at the **Willimantic Brewing Company** ^[1] and **Main Street Café**, ^[2] where he developed a charitable Guest Chef program that benefitted nearby soup kitchens, schools, and

community organizations and worked closely with local breweries and restaurants to expand a beer dinner program, establishing strong ties with both the locals purveyors and culinary customer base in the area.

In March of 2015 — after serving as chef de cuisine at **Altnaveigh Inn & Restaurant** [3] in Storrs, Connecticut and sous chef at **Weekapaug Inn** [4] in Westerly, Rhode Island — McComiskey transferred to sister property **Ocean House** [5] in Watch Hill to take on the new role as food forager. “‘Farm-to-table’ is a good term, but it’s too broad,” he explained of his approach. “I prefer ‘locavore’ because it makes people think about where their food comes from.”

This is important to the chef, as he likes to use food to “create a story and conversation,” which he does perfectly in his sourcing for the resort, particularly for the resort’s Forbes Five-Star fine-dining restaurant, **Seasons** [6]. “Almost everything is sourced within 150 miles of where we’re standing,” McComiskey declared when we visited him at Ocean House’s brand-new and very impressive Center for Wine and Culinary Arts, of which he is also the director of culinary education. It’s here where the chef really shines, leading classes for guests that cover everything from how to make Asian dumplings to a lesson on the delightful cheeses that can be found in the region.

Chef McComiskey, along with his culinary colleagues at the resort, work with an infectious passion and deep knowledge for their environment’s resources, the area’s purveyors, and their customers’ expectations, all of which culminate to provide a greatly enjoyable and educational experience for their guests.

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