

# Cooking with the Pros

Imagine learning to create delectable dishes from a professional chef! Residents have the opportunity to discover how Willow Valley Retirement Communities' chefs produce gourmet meals. The Lakes Community Dining Room, with the Action Station, provides the perfect venue for cooking demonstrations. Fresh, seasonal foods are always a major focus during the classes, and monthly themes are often employed.

The chef instructor supplies menu cards at each event with step-by-step instructions, then proceeds to cook and talk through the steps until completion. Students learn essential cooking techniques and receive innovative ideas for creating varied and healthy menus of their own. The students are in close proximity to the chef, which makes it convenient to ask questions about new concepts and techniques like garnishing, presentation, and balancing food texture with flavor.

"It's always fun," says Chef Dennis. "One of the most rewarding aspects of my position is sharing my love of cooking with Residents who are eager to learn and explore

new ingredients and techniques. These classes show that healthy cooking doesn't take a lot of planning. Sometimes we use recipes for new menu items to receive initial feedback from the Residents."

And which dish has been the greatest success so far? Chef Dennis's own Asparagus and Goat Cheese Frittata generated substantial positive feedback over the summer months.

Part test kitchen and part tutorial, the cooking demonstrations at Willow Valley Lakes Community merge fresh taste with a healthy lifestyle.



*Chef Dennis*



***"The cooking class provides an intimate atmosphere that enables Residents to have more one-on-one time with our culinary staff to ask questions and inquire about techniques."***

*—Mark Siems, Manager of Dining Services, Lakes Campus*