

What's for— Dinner?

*Personal Chef Paul Obranovich
has the answer*

By Jim Brumm

Napa Paul Obranovich has always been interested in cooking. Though he has had no formal chef training, he has spent a lifetime developing his culinary skills with friends and family. After working twenty-seven years in the grocery business as well as serving as a chef for catering businesses, Paul decided to put those cooking skills, honed with love over the years, to work.

“It’s always been a dream of mine,” he said.

Paul, a graduate of Justin-Siena High School in Napa, recently hitched his wagon to one of the fastest-growing businesses in the nation by starting his own business, *Home Dining Personal Chef Service*.

When we hear the words “personal chef,” many of us envision live-in chefs working for fabulously wealthy people. We think of Mr. French, cooking for Buffy and Jody; we think of Alice, cooking for the Brady Bunch.

But Paul Obranovich doesn’t work for a billionaire CEO or a celebrity. On the contrary, he offers



up his skills for regular families throughout the Napa Valley.

The concept is simple. For a fee he will come to your house and, using his own cooking utensils and pots and pans, will cook up to twenty meals for your family.

Here's how it works: Paul will schedule a time to interview his client at their home. At the interview he will learn about any food preferences, dislikes or health requirements the client may have.

This is where he begins to customize his service. Is the client trying to lose weight? Do they hate peas? Are they sick of chicken?

"After learning their preferences, I then offer some suggestions for their menu," said Paul. "We work together to not only meet their requirements, but to provide variety as well."

Next, Paul will schedule a cooking day. But before coming to cook he will go shopping to obtain everything he needs to cook up to twenty meals. Here, his nearly three decades in the grocery business works to his

Paul said his business helps answer that age-old question, what's for dinner?

"Personal chefs are perfect for busy couples, seniors and great for single people because it's hard to cook for one person," said Paul. "Everyone wants a personal chef," he added.

Indeed. In fact, personal chefs are poised to become as popular as housekeepers as a must-have part of modern life.

"If you look at the savings in time and trouble, it's a real value," said Paul. "You can spend that time with your family instead of cooking and cleaning. And even though I cook two weeks worth of dinners, you don't have to eat it all in two weeks. Some of my clients like to cook sometimes, and use my prepared meals when they're too busy. You can eat it when it's most convenient."

According to Paul, it's about helping to bring the family back to the dinner table. "Lots of people would love to cook but they don't have time," he said. "Between soccer practice, piano lessons or whatever, when do they

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clients' advantage. He knows how to shop for the best deals and the best ingredients.

He will arrive around 9am and spend the day in the client's kitchen, cooking two weeks of food for his client's family.

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Oh yeah, except for the two weeks worth of custom, gourmet meals waiting in the refrigerator and freezer, complete with individual heating instructions.

Paul is a member of the United States Personal Chefs Association (USPCA), which is based in New Mexico, and he has been certified by the United States Personal Chef Institute in Phoenix, Arizona.

According to the USPCA, which was formed in 1991, membership has grown from a humble five chefs at inception, to nearly 5000 members today.

Ten years ago, says the USPCA, there were only about 1000 families in the nation using personal chefs. Today, due to the explosion of private, personal chef businesses like Paul's, that number has grown to 100,000.

have time to cook? My service lets them enjoy quality time with their family."

Paul points to the growth of prepared foods in grocery stores as an example of which way the wind is blowing for modern, busy families.

"The big companies are trying to get in on the act," he said. "But most of the pre-cooked stuff in stores is loaded with sodium. It's mass-produced using ingredients that are not the freshest, not the best."

The price for Paul's service ranges from \$285 to \$325. This is typical for two people for two weeks. The price includes the menu planning, food, shopping, cooking, *and*, most importantly for many, the cleanup. It breaks down to \$14.25 to \$16.25 per meal. Not bad in a world where two large mochas at Starbucks sets you back \$6.70.

Some of the most popular dishes Paul is asked to prepare include chicken breast with tarragon and white wine, lamb stew with fennel, beef stew over polenta and chicken cacciatore over brown rice.

"I do lots of comfort foods," said Paul, smiling. "The kind of meals people crave but don't often take the time to prepare. I make it easy for them."

Chef Paul Obranovich can be reached at 707-255-4100.