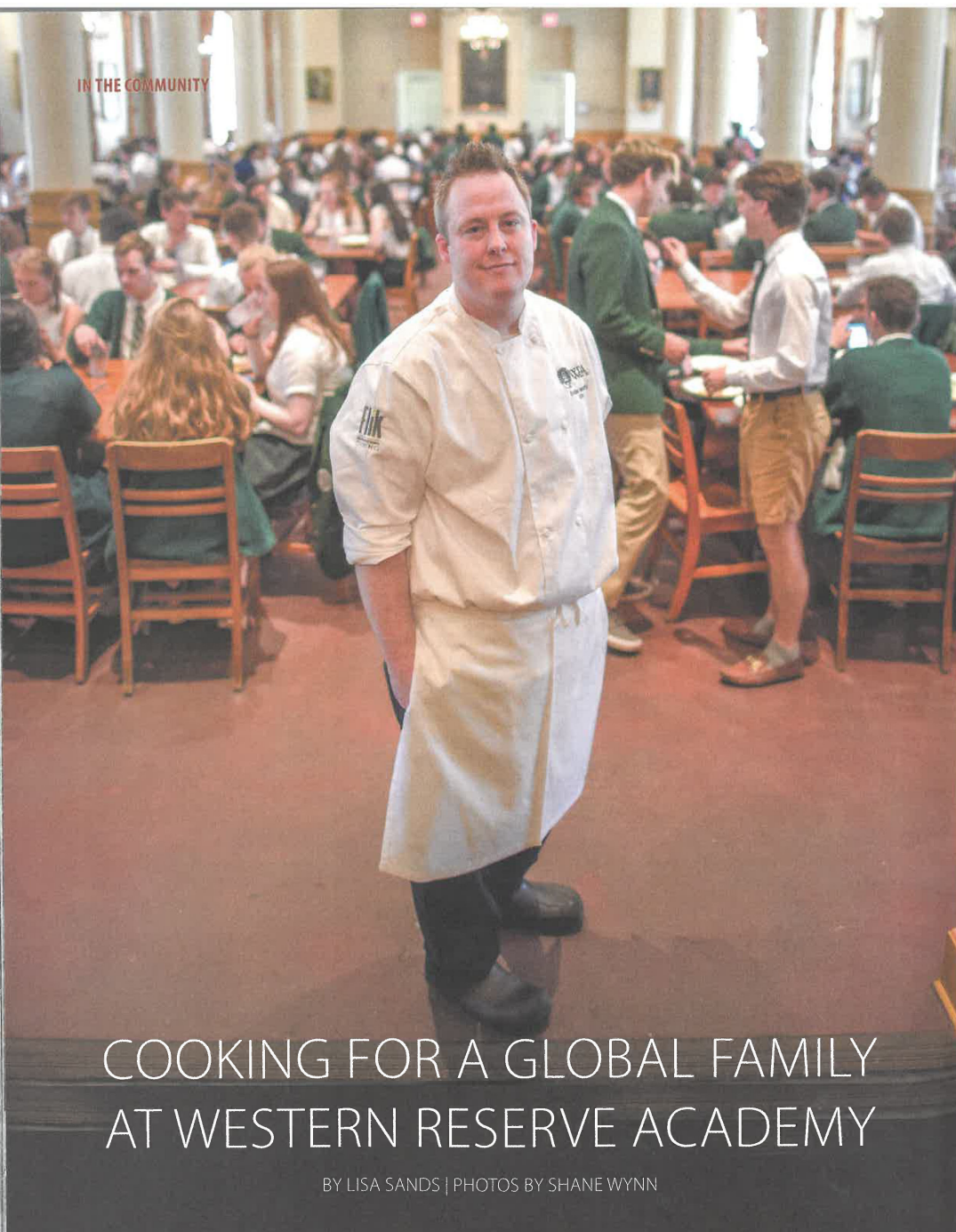


IN THE COMMUNITY



COOKING FOR A GLOBAL FAMILY AT WESTERN RESERVE ACADEMY

BY LISA SANDS | PHOTOS BY SHANE WYNN



At 11:45am each weekday, Ellsworth Dining Hall erupts with the arrival of hundreds of hungry teenagers. Competing aromas foreshadow the tough choices they will face.

Some students take their place in a traditional cafeteria line for a steaming bowl of stir-fried gyudon, a Japanese comfort dish composed of thinly sliced marinated beef and onions over rice, with traditional garnishes, including tsukemono, or pickled vegetables. Others venture over to the Chef's Whim exhibition station, where the school's head chef plates Lake Erie walleye, turnip purée, and a foraged ramp pistou with peas, mint, and oyster mushrooms garnished with pickled rhubarb and parsnip crisps.

"We're not a typical cafeteria," explained Chef Eddie Mundy, director of dining services at Western Reserve Academy, a Hudson-based boarding school for students in grades 9 through 12.

On a typical school day, Eddie and his team serve between 800–1,000 meals to a student body representing a vast number of countries, cultures, and traditions. International students comprise 22% of the population. WRA's global family includes students from across the United States, China, Dubai, Spain, Scotland, South Africa, and a host of other countries, who dine together for

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Since taking his post four years ago, Eddie has transformed the school's approach to mealtime, rolling out a culinary welcome mat with global cuisine that makes students from faraway places feel more at home. He has introduced students to Moroccan lamb stew, Nepalese pork sekuwa, Mexican fry bread tacos, and American barbecued beef brisket with Texas potato salad and homemade pickles. He educates himself on cultural holidays and religious observances, in addition to keeping track of special dietary needs.

Eddie and his team take their role seriously, understanding that they've been entrusted with the well-being of students, whose parents might be thousands of miles away. "It's the thing the mothers all worry about with their kids so far from home—will their child eat, and what will they eat?" he said.

Eddie sees students several times each day, year after year, and close relationships build over time. "My staff and I know the students by name, and they know we care about them," he said. "It's a great compliment when a student says that our food reminds them of something they eat at home."

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Opposite and above: Chef Eddie Mundy, pictured during Western Reserve Academy's lunch hour. The school cafeteria serves globally influenced cuisine that satisfies the palates of students from the around the globe.



calling than a job. Faith and family are important to him. He and his wife, Maria, have a daughter, Magnolia, and have also been foster parents to 10 children. Perhaps that's why, after cooking in other restaurants and environments Eddie, a Johnson & Wales graduate, feels so at ease here.

Outside of the school's kitchen, he can be found conducting research at small independent eateries like Minh Anh, Kifaya's Kitchen, Caribe Bakeshop, and Assad's Mediterranean Cuisine. He enjoys engaging the owners and the cooks, and is undeterred by language barriers. The gyudon, Eddie explains, was inspired by dishes he's had in Cleveland's AsiaTown, one of his favorite neighborhoods.

"I seek out restaurants that are owned by immigrants. I eat there and I talk to the cooks about the food. I read books and I watch videos. If I'm going to call something I'm making 'authentic,' I am going to be obsessed with getting it right," Eddie said.

Many of his dishes have complex flavor profiles, so he's likely to seek out spices and other ingredients at a specialty Asian or Middle Eastern market. Eddie's shopping list also includes locally made and grown items from Quarry Hill Orchards, New Creation Farm, Green City Growers, Brunty Farms, as well as some of his favorite stands at the West Side Market—The Pork Chop Shop and The Basketeria.

Eddie's cooking is steeped in the influences of family. He can't remember a time when he did not want to cook, preferring to watch cooking shows over cartoons. "I grew up fishing for Lake Erie walleye and perch, and my uncle in West Virginia taught me how to forage. My grandmother always made rhubarb pies and tarts," he said.

In his role, Eddie could wear a shirt and tie and take a more administrative approach, but that's just not his style. An important part of his job is connecting with his "customers," and he's out in front cooking at the Chef's Whim station several times a week.

Not every day brings a menu of vindaloo and falafel. More traditional cafeteria fare, such as grilled cheese, burgers, and chicken noodle soup, also have their place.

But everyone looks forward to the occasional Epic Mealtime Day (borrowed from the online video series of the same name), which could mean a BOMBay burrito with lamb tikka masala, housemade paneer and chutney, Kung Pao pastrami, or a deconstructed ramen fried chicken.

"I've earned a lot of their trust," he said. "Once you gain trust, people will try things, even things they thought they didn't like."

Find inspiration for your own family menus. See what Chef Mundy is serving on the Ellsworth Dining Hall Twitter feed @FLIKISD_WRA.

Opposite, top and bottom left: Western Reserve Academy is a global community, with students representing many cultures from around the world. Bottom right: Lake Erie walleye, turnip purée, and a foraged ramp pistou with peas, mint, and oyster mushrooms garnished with pickled rhubarb and parsnip crisps.



GYUDON

Gyudon is a Japanese dish in the Donburi, or rice bowl, family. It is popular at lunch time. There are restaurants specializing in it much like Chipotle, Qdoba, and Moe's specialize in burritos here in the U.S. It is simply prepared white rice with highly seasoned, thinly sliced beef, typically served with miso soup and tsukemono. You can find most ingredients for this dish in your grocery store's Asian section and Cleveland's AsiaTown neighborhood. Chef Eddie Mundy suggests Tink Holl, where he shops for ingredients. The beef can be an inexpensive cut (think chuck shoulder roast), and it should have a good bit of fat. Ask your butcher to slice the beef paper thin. Eddie prefers to garnish his with togarashi, a Japanese spice blend with chili and orange zest.

Serves 3–4

2 cups sushi rice (Kokuho Rose Rice is preferred)
4 cups water
1 tablespoon canola oil
1 medium white onion, thinly sliced
12 ounces thinly sliced beef
12 ounces dashi
2 ounces soy sauce
2 ounces mirin
1 teaspoon grated ginger
Shichimi or togarashi, to taste
1 tablespoon thinly sliced scallions
Poached eggs (optional)

Pickled ginger (optional)

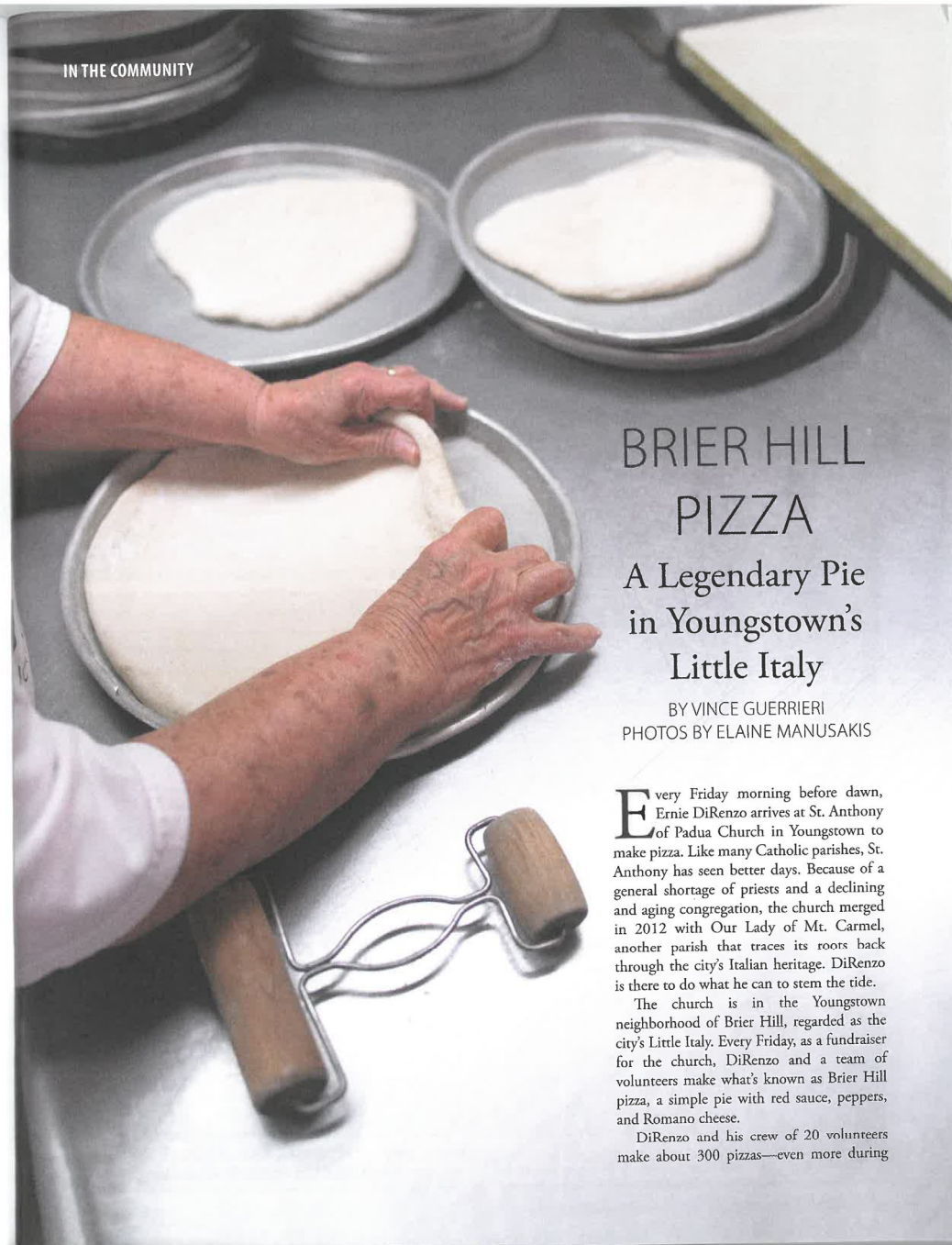
Tsukemono and miso soup (optional)

Rinse rice, agitating with hands, until water runs clear. Combine with the 2½ cups water in a rice cooker and turn on for white rice. Alternatively, place rice and water in a medium saucepan and bring to a hard boil. Adjust heat to low and allow to simmer, covered, for 20 minutes. Remove from stovetop and allow to rest for 10 minutes. Lightly stir. Meanwhile, bring a sauté pan to medium high heat. Add oil and onions. Sauté briefly until just beginning to soften, about 1–2 minutes. Add beef

and using chopsticks or whatever utensil you are most comfortable with, separate and sauté beef until lightly browned. Add dashi, soy sauce, mirin, and ginger, allow to cook down until reduced by ½, about 5 minutes. Finish with fresh ginger. Serve immediately over steamed white rice. Garnish with togarashi and scallions, and your desired add-ons, including poached eggs, pickled ginger, miso soup and/or tsukemono.

*Want to make your own dashi?
Our test cook has the recipe on
EdibleCleveland.com.*

IN THE COMMUNITY



BRIER HILL PIZZA

A Legendary Pie in Youngstown's Little Italy

BY VINCE GUERRIERI

PHOTOS BY ELAINE MANUSAKIS

Every Friday morning before dawn, Ernie DiRenzo arrives at St. Anthony of Padua Church in Youngstown to make pizza. Like many Catholic parishes, St. Anthony has seen better days. Because of a general shortage of priests and a declining and aging congregation, the church merged in 2012 with Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, another parish that traces its roots back through the city's Italian heritage. DiRenzo is there to do what he can to stem the tide.

The church is in the Youngstown neighborhood of Brier Hill, regarded as the city's Little Italy. Every Friday, as a fundraiser for the church, DiRenzo and a team of volunteers make what's known as Brier Hill pizza, a simple pie with red sauce, peppers, and Romano cheese.

DiRenzo and his crew of 20 volunteers make about 300 pizzas—even more during