

# A taste of the Netherlands: Chef Cox visits UMD

By Chris Donovan

Last week, from Oct. 3 to Oct. 6, you may have noticed that the resident and commuter dining halls were serving some foods that were a little different from what we're used to at UMD. This is due to the visit of international chef, Patrick Cox. Throughout the week Chef Patrick prepared meals for both the resident and commuter dining areas.

Born and raised in Holland, this was Chef Patrick's first visit to America. He learned to speak English when attending school in Holland. He says that in Holland they learn English and German in schools as foreign languages.

Cox first started going to school for cooking when he was 17 years old, and has never stopped. "I've always had a passion for cooking," he stated. He initially started going to school to become a baker, but after a while, he decided that what he really wanted to do was become a chef. In Holland, the standard amount of time for attending school to become a chef is six years. Chef Patrick attended for eight years and has experience in cooking, baking and serving.

He started his cooking career in small local restaurants. "Like anything, you must start from the bottom, go up and learn on the way," Cox explained. He served as a chef in small restaurants for two years before he decided he was ready to move on to larger establishments. He developed experience and skills in the lower restaurants, but he felt it was time to move on. "It was a good choice," he said.

His favorite restaurant



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**Executive chef Dan Portelance(left) and Global Chef Patrick Cox(right) prepare dessert, Junior Christopher Cutting was quoted saying "If it's on fire, you know it's good"**

was the one at which he last worked—Le Caribou, a very small and "very exclusive" restaurant that could seat about fifty people at maximum. There, he worked in a small kitchen with two other men, making sure each meal was prepared the same way. He enjoyed this experience because of the personal atmosphere. "People would come back into the kitchen and say, "Thank you for the meal; I really enjoyed it."

The restaurant almost received a star, which in the Netherlands is quite an accomplishment. "There are only about two restaurants with three stars, about five with two stars, and maybe twenty with one star." He said the biggest challenge of working at restaurants were the work schedules. Cox explained, "You have to work a lot of evenings and

weekends."

Chef Patrick brought a lot of experience with him. Aside from the eight years of classroom experience, he has competed in three cooking competitions during his seventeen years as a chef in the Netherlands. Each time he has competed, he has reached the finals, which is a very big accomplishment. He described the competitions, saying, "Of all the chefs that enter, only twelve or so make it to the finals."

On top of that, Cox has also cooked for one of the prime ministers of the Netherlands and some members of the royal family. He laughingly says, "I want to cook for the queen, but they won't let me."

He says that he has very much enjoyed his experience in America, so far. "Everyone is very nice and treats me good," he responded.

He has observed that one of the main differences in cooking styles between the Netherlands and America is that, in America, larger ingredients are used, whereas in the Netherlands, the ingredients are often chopped up very fine. But he feels that, overall, the environment in almost any kitchen is the same.

This was Chef Patrick's first time back to cooking in the kitchen in almost two years. He now spends his days in a more managerial position rather than as an active cook. With all of his experience in learning to become a cook, being a cook and sharing his skills with others, he says he really enjoys teaching: "I want to make people better."

Chef Patrick Cox is now back in the Netherlands, where he will continue to influence other chefs and spread his craft for others to learn.