



“I actually started cooking in college because I needed a job.

I didn’t have any experience, but someone I knew owned a deli that did breakfast and hot sandwiches. I started as their short order cook and kind of liked it.

After cooking at some other places when I moved to Colorado for a year, I realized that cooking is what I wanted to do. So when I moved back to Charleston, I started applying at different restaurants. I just happened to be walking by Charleston Grill and I saw someone I knew from college and gave her my resume.

Charleston Grill called me back the next day and I got to work with chef Bob Waggoner and his sous chef, who’s the head chef there now, Michelle Weaver.

Working in that type of restaurant was new for me so I just kept my head down and cooked. Michelle said they used to laugh at me when I first started because I didn’t talk for my

first six months there and I said yeah that’s because I didn’t want anyone to know that I didn’t know what the heck I was doing.

I worked there for seven years and then took my first job as an executive chef at the RiverTowne Country Club in Mt. Pleasant. I worked there and at Wild Dunes before I felt like I had done a lot of work with seafood and wanted to try something different.

I decided I wanted to learn more about steak, so my wife and I moved to Cincinnati and I took a job at a steakhouse that was a floating barge restaurant. Then one day, it unexpectedly floated it away.

My job literally floated down the river.

I took a job at the University of Cincinnati and it was when I was working there that I was introduced to the owner of Victors through my brother-in-law that still lived in Florence. My wife and I went back and forth on whether we should stay or move to Florence. She ended up finding a job at McLeod and I started with Victors in 2013.

Victors is almost a combination of some of my previous jobs. Most people just see Victors as a fine dining restaurant, but we also have the hotel component and Vic’s, our casual option. Then we do banquets and catering events and that could be a small event with 15 people, or we have done parties for 500 to 800 people.

My favorite thing to do is still work on the line. That’s where I started and that’s the reason I fell in love with working in the kitchen.

When you get an order, put it on the plate, and know that somebody enjoyed it...that’s why I still do what I do.”

- Cooper Thomas, Chef and General Manager at Victors