

## Chef Douglas James ~Chef de Cuisine, Catering and Conventions, Disney's Grand Floridian Resort & Spa ~



If anyone knows about magical beginnings, it's Chef Douglas James who got a taste of culinary magic in his first role at the *Walt Disney World*® Resort in King Stephan's restaurant in the Cinderella Castle at *Magic Kingdom*® Park (now called Cinderella's Royal Table). Surprisingly, Chef Douglas had never seen a Disney movie until he applied to

*Walt Disney World*® Resort in 1993 as a recent graduate of Johnson & Wales University in Providence, R.I. Though Disney trivia wasn't his strong suit, his culinary education and cooking experience helped him nail the job.

Inspiration from his determined mother and great-grandparents is the key to Chef Douglas' culinary success. "I learned to cook in Jamaica," James says. "I lived with my great-grandparents, and we did a lot of cooking." The skills learned from his great-grandparents were just the beginning for young James, who grew up in Jamaica before relocating to New York with his mother. "She came here from Jamaica because she wanted better opportunities for her kids," says James. "She worked for 14 years to bring my brother and me here. She worked and saved for what she wanted, and she never took anything for granted."

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It was this mentality, learned from his mother, which catapulted Chef Douglas from childhood cook to culinary master. Cinderella Castle was just the start; Chef Douglas went on to claim culinary roles at *Magic Kingdom*® Park's Crystal Palace, Tony's Town Square Restaurant, Cosmic Ray's Starlight Café,

*Disney's Animal Kingdom*® Catering—where he earned the *Walt Disney World*® Partners in Excellence Award—and more.

Today, Chef Douglas fills the role as Chef de Cuisine of Catering and Conventions at *Disney's Grand Floridian* Resort & Spa with a team of three chefs and 27 full-time culinary cast members who are dedicated to creating custom menus and world-class events that will "wow" guests. "[Growing up] we used a lot of fresh chili pepper, allspice, thyme, scallions, ginger, rum, coconut and citrus. Today, I like to infuse those flavors into my foods." Many of these flavors are incorporated into menus he creates for the global Disney Fairytale Weddings division.

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"There's always something new that I can look forward to," says James. "We do anything from popcorn to caviar. We cater themed events and weddings of every type." It's all about emotions and we want to help them capture their vision."

When he's not capturing the vision of *Walt Disney World*® Resort Guests, Chef Douglas can be found in the comfort of his home preparing garlic butter shrimp and chicken and dumplings—two of his children's favorite dishes.

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