

## WHAT'S IN STORE

BY COREY BURDICK  
PHOTOS BY ROGER CROWLEY



# KISS the COOK

Warm up your  
winter kitchen

The beauty of autumn has transitioned to the bluster that is winter in Vermont. With the snow flying and wind gusting, what better time to head to the kitchen for comfort food cooking? When you need just the right tools or maybe some inspiration from fellow culinarians, Kiss the

Cook, Burlington's locally owned cookware store right on the Church Street Marketplace, is there to help.

Kiss the Cook has been a family-owned business since the early 1990s. It was originally founded by Marie Bouffard and Mike Soulia, who operated the store for more

than 20 years. Kiss the Cook was purchased by Luke and Ashley Wight in 2014. Prior to purchasing the store, Luke spent about five years at Green Mountain Coffee Roasters in various sales and marketing roles. Ashley, who assists in the store during busy times and oversees blog content, works full time



for Howard Center. The couple has now owned the business for a little over two years, and it continues to thrive.

This past October, Kiss the Cook celebrated its 25th anniversary with a number of in-store special events and sales. The main event featured Wüsthof Executive Chef Mike Garaghty doing demonstrations on topics such as how to properly bone a chicken, knife sharpening, turkey carving, and garnishing. Customer appreciation sales took place all month, and a portion of sales on one weekend went

Opposite page: Lifetime quality cookware from brands like Le Creuset are available in an abundance of styles and colors.

Center: A rainy morning on Church Street through Kiss the Cook's seasonally decorated windows.

Top: Walls are lined from floor to ceiling with gadgets, gifts, and local food products.

Above: Luke and Ashley Wight review their product selection.



Among the great selection of kitchen tools and gadgets is a variety of fun and effective items to store your fruits and veggies and help keep them fresh.

Opposite: Store Manager Sherwin Westover is always a great help to customers.

to the Vermont Foodbank.

In addition to the store's longevity on the marketplace, it's received accolades such as being named the "Best Kitchen Store in Vermont" by *Seven Days*. And when Wüsthof was celebrating its 200th anniversary in 2015, Kiss the Cook was selected as one of only eight retailers nationwide to be awarded a trip to visit its factory.

### A Mission to Give Back

Kiss the Cook is a key resource for people who are seeking the best kitchen tools, both useful and fun, to inspire their culinary pursuits. While Luke and Ashley certainly provide a great service for shoppers, they also give back to the community in other ways.

"There are so many worthy causes, and we get so much support from local customers that we try to support our community wher-





ever we can,” Luke says. “A few times a year we invite customers to trade in any of their gently used kitchen equipment, and we provide them with a coupon for each item for a discount on a new item. We refurbish their used items, and then donate them to various groups that may be able to use them.”

Perhaps this is part of what has made Kiss the Cook so successful in an increasingly competitive market, both online and off. With the changing nature of shopping in mind, Luke is ever watchful of the store’s inventory levels, national trends, and the seasonality of items, which can change very quickly in Vermont.

Then there’s the price factor. “A lot of times I think small local businesses have a reputation for not being able to compete with larger stores on price, but we spend a lot of time making sure we’re priced competitively. Many of the brands we carry have a minimum price they suggest selling their products at, and we always try and meet that price so we’re competitive for our customers,” Luke says.

If you’re like me, when you walk into Kiss the Cook, you’re likely to find it tough to narrow down your purchase to a handful of items. Luke is always gracious about sharing his recommendations. His first pick is a knife, “the most important tool in the kitchen.” Luke’s favorite is the Wüsthof Classic Ikon eight-inch Cook’s Knife. “It’s sharp,

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# AT THE FLYNN



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**Cirque Mother Africa**

**Balé Folclórico da Bahia**

**MOMIX: Opus Cactus**

**Garrison Keillor**

**The Chieftains**

**Ladysmith Black Mambazo**

**Marc Maron**  
*The Too Real Tour*

**Broadway National Tour**  
*42nd Street*

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Kiss the Cook has been locally owned on the Church Street Marketplace for over 25 years.

Opposite: As the seasons change, so do the window displays at Kiss the Cook.

well-balanced, and is capable of just about any job I need it to do!” Luke says.

Another favorite is the euroSCRUBBY. “It’s a simple and small cleaning item . . . simultaneously abrasive enough to scrub away the toughest messes yet gentle enough to clean glass stove tops. ‘Magic’ is the only way to describe it.”

### What’s Next?

Building on the business’s long history of success, Luke says that moving forward, they

would like to find a way to make demonstrations more hands-on for people who participate so that they can leave ready to execute the techniques confidently at home.

“Currently we do in-store demonstrations and samplings, and we try and have an event one or two times each month. We started in the winter of 2015, originally doing just one event a month. Customer response and feedback were really positive, so we’ve tried to do at least two events a month in 2016. It’s part of our effort to make sure we’re not



just a store but a destination for people who love food and cooking,” says Luke.

In addition, the duo has been busy honing their website with plans to increase their blog presence where they plan to share recipes, product reviews, and information about upcoming events.

Want to know more about demos and recipe ideas for all that great cookware you just bought? Visit [kissthecook.net](http://kissthecook.net). While you're there, sign up for Kiss the Cook's monthly newsletter, which announces upcoming events. Events are also announced on Facebook. ❁

### Kiss the Cook

72 Church Street  
Burlington, VT  
(802) 863-4226  
[kissthecook.net](http://kissthecook.net)

### online EXTRA!

Luke reviews Kiss the Cook's top five gadgets at [www.bestofburlingtonvt.com](http://www.bestofburlingtonvt.com).



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