



Scott Crane, center, cuts peppers, while his grandmother Charlotte Boyer, left, and care consultant Eileen Considine-Boggins help him prepare a four-course meal for his family in Northbrook recently. Crane has a rare form of muscular dystrophy. (Heather Charles, Chicago Tribune / July 21, 2010)

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Hospice patient savors chance to cook four-course meal

Young man with rare form of muscular dystrophy makes gourmet dinner for his family in Northbrook

By Lisa Black, Tribune reporter
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Scott Crane weighed only 70 pounds last November because of complications from a rare form of muscular dystrophy. But what really bothered him was that he had lost his greatest passion — his appetite.

So when a hospice social worker asked the young man how she could help him — he'd already ruled out music therapy and a visit from the rabbi — he responded, weakly, "Food therapy?"

The social worker knew that another hospice worker had a culinary degree and called Eileen Considine-Boggins right over. And so it came to pass that Crane recently celebrated his 23rd birthday by cooking a four-course gourmet meal for his family at their Northbrook home.

Crane, whose actual birthday is Sunday, grew stronger with help from "chef Eileen," who arrived from Midwest Palliative & Hospice CareCenter in Glenview with cookbooks and ideas, he said. The two, who now cook together every Thursday, texted recipes back and forth for days before coming up with a special birthday menu for him and his sister, Lindsay, who will soon turn 26.

For starters, Scott Crane and Considine-Boggins assembled a platter of assorted olives, gourmet cheeses and grilled bread. Then came the grilled sea scallops and a bibb salad served in a basket made of baked Parmesan

cheese. The entree was filet mignon with Madeira sauce, sea bass, and grilled asparagus with lemon and toasted pine nuts. Apple pie and chocolate cake were for dessert.

"My parents know I am sick when I don't want to eat," said Crane, whose grandparents drove in from New York to celebrate the occasion. "I've been cooking forever with my dad. I love creating new things. I like the cooking channel."

Sitting in a power wheelchair behind a low kitchen counter, he used a fork and knife to chop orange and yellow peppers with slow, measured cuts. He snapped asparagus stalks in half while preparing the appetizer, then wrapped prosciutto around melon wedges.

"They have given him something to look forward to," said his mother, Teena Crane, her eyes reddening as she recounted the family's stressful year. "He loves, loves, loves food."

At age 4, he asked for shrimp de jonne after a visit to the pediatrician she said. In elementary school, he dined at Kendall College and toured the culinary school's kitchen but ruled out a career as a chef because it was too hot. Instead, he decided he wanted to be a food critic, paying special attention to whether restaurants are accessible to people with disabilities.

By high school, he was addicted to the Food Network, leading his mother to take him out of class once to meet chef Emeril Lagasse at a book-signing.

"Other kids were ordering grilled cheese and peanut butter and jelly, and he would want lobster," she said.

The family knew something was wrong when Scott was born because he did not have the strength to take in milk or water, she said. When he was 4, he was diagnosed with muscular dystrophy and, later, with a rare form of the disease, centronuclear myopathy, which weakens every muscle in his body.

He began using a wheelchair when he was in junior high school, but did not let his deteriorating muscles slow him down. After graduating from Glenbrook North High School, he attended community college, volunteered at the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago and worked at the Corner Bakery Cafe at Northbrook Court.

But last fall, the aggressive disease started affecting his lungs and heart. He spent seven weeks at Northwestern Memorial Hospital and the Rehabilitation Institute before being released by Thanksgiving, Teena Crane said.

"They told him he would have to eat pureed food, baby food," his mother said. "He was devastated."

He grew strong enough to chew, and began to eat again. But he struggled with more bad days than good, and the family signed up for hospice.

Friends brought in trays of homemade desserts, trying to cheer him up. When the harpists who play to comfort those who are dying — called music thanatologists — showed up, Scott Crane sent them away. "I'm, like, I'm not dying today," he said.

After Considine-Boggins arrived on the scene, the two began trading recipes and cookbooks and planning weekly meals.

"I think they are the reason he is where he is," Teena Crane said of the hospice. "I don't know whether he otherwise would make it."

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