



O'Connell pops on The Martha Stewart Show

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The Inn at Little Washington's own Patrick O'Connell appeared on The Martha Stewart Show this week in an episode featuring seven acclaimed chefs cooking up their favorite late-night snacks.

What after-hour munchies does O'Connell prefer? Popcorn with Parmesan cheese.

"They are master chefs, the ultimate in culinary all-stars from across the county and for the very first time they're here together all hour long," Stewart introduced the program that aired Wednesday on the Hallmark Channel and was taped in her New York City studio.

"If you watch just one cooking show, make it this one."

All of the featured chefs, including Rappahannock County's O'Connell, were past recipients of the annual award bestowed by the charitable foundation of the late chef James Beard, an author, educator and TV personality known as the dean of American cookery.

O'Connell appeared in the final segment of The Martha Stewart Show episode along with celebrity chef David Bouley, who prepared cheesy mashed potatoes. ←

The Inn at Little Washington chef started popping popcorn while Bouley finished causing Stewart to exclaim, "You're making a lot of noise ... and wait 'til you taste that – oh my god."

Featured in the James Beard Foundation's "Best of the Best" recently re-released 25th Anniversary Celebration of America's Outstanding Chefs, self-taught O'Connell told Stewart what he loves best about the book is it tells about each chef's background and personal story.

"It gives you a real flavor of why they cook the way they do," said O'Connell.

As for popcorn as his favorite late-night snack that idea came from his Little Washington patrons.

"We have beautiful tables in the kitchen and guests were saying it's just like dinner and a movie," O'Connell said. "So I thought we'd play on that."

The Inn developed little red-and-white-striped popcorn containers with a logo on it, available for room service filled with goodies.

"We use an air popper," he said, shifting around a Whirley Pop stovetop popper.

The Inn uses popcorn from Dutch Valley Foods in Pa., and a little something extra from the chef.

"Lots and lots of Parmesan cheese," O'Connell said, freshly grating it over the popcorn, and adding, "A little butter – a few tablespoons. The secret, if you can get it," he told Martha, "is white truffle oil and whatever favorite herb you have. This is just some flat-leafed Italian parsley minced up. It makes it look very healthy. Children love this."

No matter the age, can't go wrong with popcorn.

Other chefs appearing on the episode with O'Connell included Eric Ripert, Alfred Portale, Tom Colicchio, Larry Forgione and Jean-Georges Vongerichten.