



Kevin Rupert / Wesley Ridge

I'm the Executive Chef at Wesley Ridge. My mother was in senior living as the director of dining services. I went to school originally for engineering, but it didn't click, so I came home and worked for my mom as a dishwasher on and off, and one day, we had a cook pass away, and she needed someone to fill in. I then went to culinary school.

I really love working here at Wesley Ridge. We truly care about the resident experience. This is a place I plan on being for a long time, we have a great team here. This is my first nonprofit arena, and I really enjoy the freedom I have to act on things I feel will benefit both associates and residents. It's more about process here than financial worry, which is fantastic. I don't feel held back by financial constraints, residents are well taken care of, and staff appreciate all we do to make their job easier.

I worked for three years at Norwegian Cruise Line in Hawaii. I didn't know what to expect, I had never been on a large cruise ship like that before. They don't have kitchens, they're galleys, and it's all electric, so cooking is different than what we're used to. We had an advantage over other ships because we could port in Hawaii and get local produce there. I got to learn from chefs all over the world and learn local cuisines, like from Japan and Germany, to incorporate into the menu. That job gave me so much growth in a short period of time. A lot of our residents are cruisers here and love to pick my brain and share menus they just got from a trip. Wesley Ridge is a lot like a cruise ship because of the atmosphere that residents can come and go as they please, there's activities around the building, and they know they can do what they like. We try to keep our dining room as free-style as possible, like a cruise ship. The residents like to have things on their calendar, but not feel forced to go if they don't want to. We try to offer as much variety as possible, like having themed nights.

I try to incorporate unique and cultural recipes into our menus from my time on the cruise ship. I get residents excited to try things they've never had or heard of before, while also having the option for familiar meals. They like to feel adventurous, and theme nights showcase our cooks' skills. Residents want comfort food available, but enjoy seeing what they wouldn't normally see. We try to make it feel as much like a restaurant as possible for those who don't want to go out as much or can't.



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We want the residents to feel like they're at home and out at a restaurant all at the same time. We want to give them the best service, answer questions, and make them as happy as we can. As we get older, we're more conscious of healthy foods and nutrition, so we want to make sure our food is fresh. For those who want to be active and healthy, we want to be conscious of that. We notice these trends of wanting to be healthier and not just eating comfort foods. We want to provide options prepared here instead of packaged orders. Residents are very active with social issues like being healthy and environmentally friendly, and LEC provides the funds to make these changes that's better for the environment and makes the residents happy.

We're moving from the stigma of institutionalized food to meeting today's demand for fresh, delicious, nutritious meals. Everyone who goes to culinary school has dreams of running their own restaurant, but they also want a quality of life and to be with family at home while enjoying the craft and not being chained to crazy restaurant hours. Working in dining in senior living provides a greater quality of life all around.

I really appreciate my job at Wesley Ridge. I'm excited every day to come to work and strongly recommend working here!