

## **More than Perfect**

By Krysta Camp

Sarah swung open the door to the kitchen of her catering company, Happy Meals Kitchen, to inform her head chef of his next assignment. “Ryan, I hope you love your job.”

“You know I do. There is nothing better for me than to come here and cook every day,” Ryan told her, his voice and his smile proved it to be the truth.

“Well, if you still feel this way after meeting your next client, I promise you a raise.”

“I could use a raise,” Ryan said with a slight chuckle.

“Good luck. She is here wanting to talk to our head chef, and I remember hiring you into that position. Correct me if I am wrong,” Sarah said in her normal sarcastic tone.

“Does this wonderful client of ours have a name?” Ryan asked.

“Gabriella Smith, soon to be Gabriella Cohen. If she can ever figure out what food she wants.”

“Well, I assume this means I should go meet the Gabriella that is so raved about,” Ryan said leaving the kitchen.

“Oh by the way, she would prefer to be called Gaby. Trust me, I found out the hard way,” Sarah warned Ryan.

There was a very lovely young lady waiting in the lobby, not with much patience, though. She had her hand laid on the arm of the chair she occupied in just a way to show off what looked to be a two carat diamond engagement ring. She stood to introduce herself to the chef.

“Hello, Ryan, I assume. I am Gaby Smith. My fiancé, Mike, and I are still looking for the perfect wedding meal. We have tried The Right Bite and Meals and Dreams. Neither one have been able to do the job. We are hoping that you will have the perfect meal.”

“Well, they say ‘third times the charm,’ right?” Ryan asked.

“I hope so.”

“Would you like to look at a book of previous wedding meals we have made?”

“Well, we really wanted to be different. We had hoped you could help us create the perfect meal. Not the same one as at the wedding last weekend.”

“OK. Happy Meals Kitchen at your service,” Ryan said, hoping this would be easier than it appeared it would be. “Is there any certain requirements you are looking for in a meal?”

“I am not really sure what I am wanting right now. Maybe a meat, a few vegetables, whatever else you need for a wedding meal,” Gaby said, giving no help to Ryan whatsoever.

“I see. Well exactly what do you want our company to do?” Ryan asked her, unsure of why she had come to Happy Meals at all.

“Present me with plans for the perfect wedding meal.” Gaby responded matter-of-factly.

“Are you wanting any say-how in these meal?” Sarah asked, trying hard to help Ryan with this one.

“I think you two can handle creating a good meal. I will be back here at 9 tomorrow and would like to see a plan for a meal. Thank you very much for your help.”

Gaby walked out of the door as if she had actually given information that would help create her dream wedding meal.

“Sarah, I don’t know if I still want that raise. I don’t know how to give her the perfect meal if I don’t know what she wants,” Ryan said while pondering how this would work.

“Ryan, you are head chef because you know how to make people happy. Gaby’s requests are far from reasonable, but her being a client means we have to meet them,” Sarah instructed Ryan. “Come up with a meal plan that you think might suit her. If she does not like it, we will try to get more out of her tomorrow.”

This helped Ryan quite a bit. He may not know what she wanted now, but he could create a meal plan. She may not like it, but it would help Ryan to get a better idea of what Gaby was envisioning at the reception tables.

Ryan decided he would choose chicken as the meat. He went with his favorite, lemon pepper grilled chicken. As far as vegetables, green beans had to be served. He also added steamed broccoli and carrots with pepper corn seasoning. Ryan would also make home-style mashed potatoes, just like the ones his mom made on the farm when he was a kid.

Gaby arrived promptly at nine the next morning. “Have you come up with the perfect plan?”

Ryan wiped flour from his hands on his apron. “I have planned a meal I think you may like. If you want to follow me into the client meeting room, Sarah and I will tell you what we would like to serve at your wedding.”

As Gaby walked into the room, Sarah forced a smile on her face. She prayed this was the meal Gaby was looking for. “Hello Gaby. I hope you had a good night.”

“It was wonderful,” Gaby smiled. “Thanks for asking.”

“Well,” Ryan said, “here is a sample of the meal we came up with for your wedding. I hope you like it.”

“OK, let me look,” Gaby said. She began carefully examining the plate on the table. She smiled at one thing, frowned at another, and look confused at some items. Ryan hoped that was a good sign of some sort.

“I definitely want steak instead of chicken, but then again you can still fix that. Is there anyway I could get a fork to try some of this?” Gaby asked.

Ryan left and came back in with a fork in hand. “Here you go.”

“Thank you,” Gaby said. She took the fork and began trying the vegetables and the mashed potatoes. “These potatoes are amazing. I need them for sure,” she told Ryan. “I am not particularly fond of any of the vegetables, but I am sure you are completely able to come up with a better group.”

“OK. Yes ma’am. When do you want me to have that ready for you. I get can get it done as early as the day after tomorrow,” Ryan told Gaby, hoping that would work.

“Oh no, that just won’t do,” Gaby said, as if it was easy to come up with a meal. “It is May 15, and we are getting married June 10. I still have so much to do and need to get this taken care of right away. I can come by tomorrow at five in the evening. Could you please have it ready then?” Gaby asked hoping it was possible. She did not mean to seem so hard to work with, but she really did have to get a lot done for her perfect day. If

only her fiancé would leave work long enough to help with the plans. To him the wedding was the woman's job.

"I am sure we will find a way," Sarah said." Happy Meals is known for making its customers happy. I am sure you will find that to be true. We will see you tomorrow."

Sarah forced a smile and hoped what she said really was true.

Once Gaby walked out, Ryan turned to Sarah. "I have two cakes to make and a party of about 50 to cook for. The party is tomorrow at lunch. And I have to cook a meal for a bride who doesn't like what I make. Sorry if I sound upset, but it might be a little much to ask." Ryan tried to keep his voice rational. He knew Sarah was only doing her job, but he still felt stressed.

"Don't worry. There are other chefs in the kitchen. They can help. Tackle one thing at a time and enjoy time with your wife tonight," Sarah encouraged Ryan.

Ryan went back into the kitchen hoping some other idea would pop into his head. She wanted steak. OK, he could cook steak. Then again, how would he season it? What kind of steak should he use? What would happen if she didn't like it? He was very worried, but once again this was his job. He walked to his spice cabinet to see what he could use. After looking for awhile, he decided he would use herbs. He also decided to smoke the steak. He began pulling down herbs and set them aside to work on tomorrow. He had today to begin working on food for the party and tomorrow morning. He could finish this meal in the afternoon.

He managed to get all the food for the party made. So he then set out to work on the meal for Gaby. He used his finest steak, T-bone tails. He seasoned them with herbs and then put them on the smoker. He then went to look at vegetables. Maybe she would

like asparagus, carrots, and peas. Ryan figured there wasn't much else to try, so he got them out and began to prepare them.

When Gaby arrived at five, Ryan had just finished placing the food on the plate. Sarah greeted her in the lobby. "Hello Gaby. I hope you had a fine day."

"I did. The alterations on my dress are finally done. They are even done right this time." Gaby told her, seeming to be in a good mood.

"That's great," Sarah told her smiling. "Well why don't you follow me in here, and Ryan will bring the food right in." They entered the room just as Ryan was carrying in the plate.

"Oh!" Gaby said. "It looks beautiful. I am sure it will taste that way."

"I did come prepared this time," Ryan said. "Here is a fork." He handed it to her with a grin on his face. Gaby smiled and took the fork. She began trying the food. Both Ryan and Sarah waited hopefully.

"These vegetables are much improved," Sarah said, pleased. "May I ask what seasoning you used on the chicken I tried?"

"Yes," Ryan responded. "It was lemon pepper."

"Is it possible to put that on steak as well?" Sarah wondered. "I thought it was wonderful and would be the perfect finishing touch to this meal."

"It is my favorite seasoning," Ryan told her. He was beginning to see the light at the end of this tunnel. "It tastes just as good on steak as on chicken. I think you will love it."

“I am sure I will,” Gaby said. “I am sorry, but I need to get out of here quickly. Do you think I could come back next week on Tuesday to try that steak? Everything else is perfect though.”

“Next Tuesday is fine,” Ryan and Sarah said in unison.

“Does 2 p.m. work for you?” Gaby asked.

“It sure does,” Sarah told her.

“Thank you very much. I will see you both Tuesday.” As she walked out, Ryan smiled knowing that she wasn’t going to be as hard to work with as he thought. Now he could only hope she did like the steak.

Gaby walked in the next Tuesday in quite a wonderful mood. It seemed things were going all right for her. Ryan actually had not dreaded her visit as much as he had thought he would. He met her in the lobby this time instead of Sarah.

“Well, hello, Gaby. Don’t you look wonderful? Your steak is in the conference room with Sarah. So let’s make our way there,” Ryan said happily. When they got in the room Gaby walked straight to the food. She picked up the fork and knife and tried the steak. She then turned back to Ryan and Sarah with a large smile on her face.

“Oh my,” she exclaimed. “That is amazing. I do not think I have ever tasted a steak that wonderful. Wow, thank you both so much for what you have done.” It was very easy to see Gaby was far more than just pleased. “I hope you will both come to my wedding not only as caterers, but also as guests.”

“You are very welcome,” Ryan said. “As for coming to your wedding, I will have to discuss it with my boss. You know it might be un-business like,” Ryan told her with a smirk. Sarah stared at Ryan thinking that ,well, that was un-business like, too.

“OK. I hope you can come,” Gaby told them with a smile. “I have to run, but I will see you at my wedding. “

“As guests,” Sarah said, “of course.”

“Bye,” Gaby said as she left. When she reached the door, she turned back around. “Thank you for everything. You are both amazing.” She closed the door and walked out.

“Well, I never thought that one would end,” Ryan said with a grin. Just then the phone rang.

“Happy Meals Kitchen,” Sarah answered. “This is Sarah. How may I help you?”

“Hello, Sarah,” a slightly familiar voice said. “I forgot to talk to you about what I need for the rehearsal dinner.”

“Gaby, I can hand the phone to Ryan so you can discuss when to get it ready by,” Sarah told her. She was desperately trying to hide the fact she was trying to get rid of the phone.

“Oh, no,” Gaby told her. “Just tell him I want haggis. Thank you.” She hung up the phone.

Sarah turned to Ryan. “She wants haggis for her rehearsal dinner.”

“Haggis?”

“ Yes, Haggis.” Sarah just walked away laughing.