

■ Albany native Bradley Rouse makes sure members of the Atlanta Hawks NBA team are well fed.

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# On top of his game

**A**LBANY — It's basketball season once again and the Atlanta Hawks are gearing up for their season opener on Oct. 11.

Not only does the National Basketball Association team's regimen include practice and exercise, but it also requires maintaining a healthy diet. That's where team chef Bradley Rouse comes in.

"I work hand-in-hand with the trainers and with the guys on their dietary needs," Rouse said.

The Albany native makes it his job to ensure the players receive all the carbohydrates and protein needed to perform at their best.

"It entails getting to know the guys and what they want," Rouse said.

To meet those needs, the 30-year-old makes breakfast and lunch every practice day and lunch and dinner on game days.

## BRADLEY FUN FACTS CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT:

Espresso, music and the summer

**RINGTONES:** Your basic ring

**FAVORITE TV SHOW:** 'No Reservations' on the Travel Channel

So on busy days, Rouse and his staff serve 65-150 people. That includes players, coaches, training staff and guests.

"I'll usually serve a family-style meal,"

Rouse said. "That includes two white meats with vegetables."

The former sous chef was recruited as part of several changes made for the 2005-06 season.

"Last year, we had the youngest team in the NBA," said Atlanta Hawks General Manager Billy Knight. "We wanted those guys eating right and taking care of themselves. We thought a chef could provide the proper nutrients they needed."

Because several recruits were so young, Knight wanted to put an end to bad habits they might have developed while in college.

"We didn't want those guys living off fast-food," Knight said.

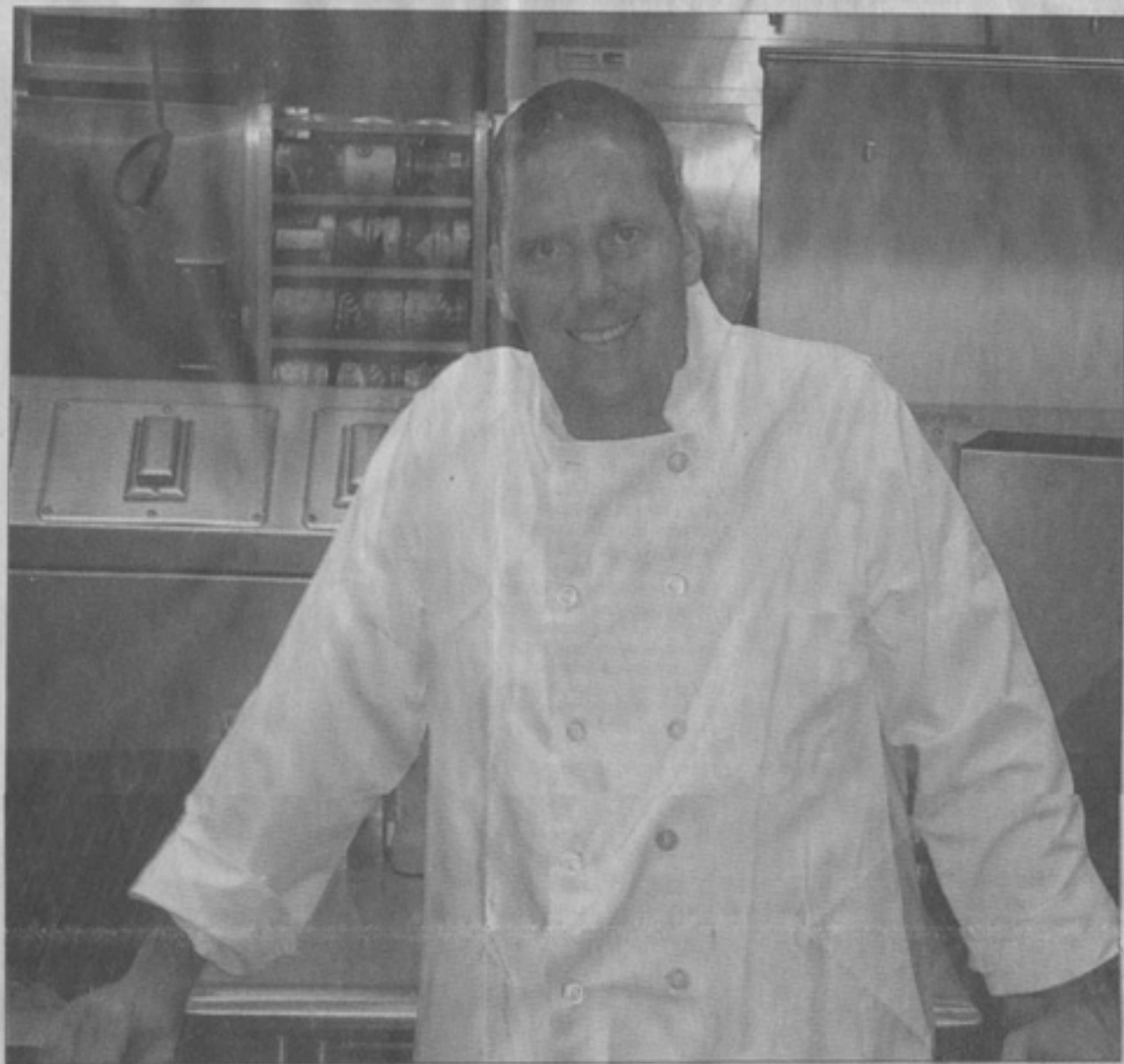
The general manager believes bringing Rouse on board was a good decision.

"We've seen the noticeable difference in how the players are able to maintain their weight," Knight said.

"It's good for everybody except those of us trying to lose weight."

He pointed out that Rouse's food is still in demand, even when players don't have time to sit down for a meal.

"A lot of the players get to-go containers,"



Albany native Bradley Rouse is starting his second season as the chef for the Atlanta Hawks.

Special photo

Knight said.

Rouse is equally happy to be part of the team, adding that one of the best benefits is having the summer off.

"I have May-September free," the classically-trained chef said.

Some of that free time is spent indulging in extreme sports.

"I'm still an active skateboarder at 30," Rouse said.

The Deerfield-Windsor School graduate credits his father with instilling in him the love of all things culinary, thus leading him down a path to the Hawks.

"My father was an amateur chef," Rouse said. "He's always been a huge influence on me."

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Bradley Rouse

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## SWEET POTATO PIE FILLING

### INGREDIENTS:

- 4 large sweet potatoes
- 1 banana, roasted (secret ingredient)
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 stick of butter
- Pinch cinnamon
- Pinch nutmeg
- Pinch salt

### DIRECTIONS:

Peel and cut the potatoes into small pieces. This will allow them to cook quicker and also help prevent them from becoming pasty. Boil or steam potatoes until very tender.

In a mixing bowl or food processor, add the potatoes, cream, butter, roasted banana, sugar and spices. With a whip or heavy-duty wire whisk, whip the mixture

until smooth.

Place pie dough over a 10-inch pie dish or use premade dough if you wish. Pour mixture into crust and bake at 300 degrees for about 20 minutes or until a toothpick comes out dry.

**NOTE:** Remember, in Southern cooking it is always OK to add a little more sugar, butter or cream.

## SWEET POTATO PIE TOPPING

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- Sugar
- Cinnamon

### DIRECTIONS:

Whip cream to stiff peak and add sugar and spice. Top your pie with generous portion.