

Famed Chef at Harlem's blujeen Uses Veggies From Bronx Rooftop Garden

By [Eddie Small](#) | July 16, 2015 5:39pm

SOUTH BRONX — The chef who helped cater Chelsea Clinton's wedding gets his fresh vegetables for his new restaurant from a rooftop garden in the South Bronx.



[Lance Knowling](#), who runs Harlem's [blujeen](#) restaurant, could hit the Fairway or the Whole Foods for his ingredients, but he opts for the rooftop garden at 1330 Intervale Ave., an affordable housing complex owned by the [Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation](#) instead.

"They have some specialty herbs," he said, "and they grow some other nice things that you can't buy in a grocery store just for the restaurant."

The group has partnered with Knowling to help provide produce for his [Black Chef Summer Series](#), an event meant to highlight talented African-American chefs from all over the United States by having them cook dinners at blujeen each Monday night this season.

WHEDco board member Russell Jackson, a chef himself, connected the organization with Knowling, who was extremely pleased with the vegetables he had received from the garden so far.

Vegetables and herbs that the garden has grown for blujeen include dill, thyme, lemon thyme and baby collared greens, according to the chef. He also buys collard greens, jalapeños and arugula from the garden.

The money that WHEDco gets from providing Knowling with the produce goes right back into the garden, which is one of the main appeals of the partnership for the group, according to Michelle Canizio, sustainability and social change manager at WHEDco.

"It mostly is to support the farm," she said, "and ... to expand our reach to another New York City neighborhood in terms of providing fresh food."

The garden launched in 2010 and has grown more than 4,000 pounds of fruit and vegetables since then.

Although its relatively small size means that blujeen cannot get all of its vegetables from the garden, Knowling said he was still happy to be able to support the project.

"It's nice to have something grown fresh and locally," he said, "especially if they can produce something that only we're using."

The Black Chef Summer Series series kicked off earlier in July and will run each Monday night through Sept. 7. Each dinner costs \$65.

blujeen opened roughly three months ago serving American comfort food, and Knowling said that things had been going fairly well so far.

"Obviously, we'd like to do more," he said, "but so far, so good."

[Original story published on DNAinfo.com](#)