

FOOD

For this autistic 24-year-old Westchester resident, food is all about connections



Jeanne Muchnick

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Key Points

Westchester's Philip Schultz is making a name for himself as a food influencer on Instagram, while making a difference.

Schultz has raised thousands of dollars for organizations that support the autistic community.

Philip the Food Guy specializes in reviews of gluten-free friendly restaurants.

wenty-four-year-old Harrison resident [Philip Schultz](#) has not let autism or celiac disease stand in the way of showcasing his love for food. If anything it's only enhanced his passion for connecting with people and helping others by raising money for charities close to his heart.

His Instagram page, where he goes by "[Philip the Food Guy](#)," is all about reviewing restaurants that are gluten-free friendly. He started the page in April 2022, but a year ago started branching out by interviewing restaurateurs and, when he can, going behind the scenes to the kitchen.

Since starting, the avid cook, who has his own business cards, has done approximately 50 reviews and 20 interviews, everything from La Casa Purchase in Purchase to Shiraz Kitchen in White Plains to Colony Grill in Port Chester and Meraki Taverna in Armonk. Most impressive is how much money he's raised through various events to support charities: more than \$10,000 for organizations such as [Project SEARCH](#), which offers job training through [The Arc of Westchester](#)

(where he's a proud graduate), [Autism Speaks](#), which sponsors autism research and helps raise awareness, [Green Chimneys](#), which helps young people to maximize their full potential by providing residential, educational, clinical and recreational services, and [ASAN](#), an autistic self advocacy network.

He's also raised money for [South East Consortium](#), a special needs recreation program in lower Westchester and for [Yes She Can](#), a job training, advocacy and skill building program for girls on the spectrum.

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Each event, which Schultz said is also about raising awareness about "the awesomeness of adults on the autism spectrum," has been different. At one event, he did a cooking class with Chef Robb Garceau of Sam's of Gedney Way in White Plains, and made his favorite chicken scarp for Green Chimneys and Autism Speaks; for another he paired with Longford's of Rye to raise money for Project Search Autism Enhancement by creating a gluten-free ice cream cone. In another Longford's collaboration, he designed a special cookie overload milkshake to benefit The Arc of Westchester.

Next up is a specialty pizza with Al Dente Pizzeria in Rye for [Access Equestrian](#), a therapeutic riding program in Bedford where he rides weekly.

More than a food page

He's also paired with Jenny Rodriguez of the Instagram handle [The Pint-Sized Vegan](#), where the two do food tours and on occasions, events. "She's vegan and I'm gluten-free so it's a good combination," he said. They recently did one in Port Chester and, since Schultz splits his time between his parent's houses in Harrison and Riverside, Conn., he's doing another one in Greenwich on May 3.

A Harrison food tour, still in the planning stages, is being organized for the summer (watch his Instagram for more details).

Schultz does all this on top of working in the food service industry. Since graduating from Harrison High School in 2022 as well as getting job training through Arc of Westchester's Project SEARCH, he did volunteer work at Sam's of Gedney Way, completed an internship at New York Presbyterian Westchester Behavioral Health, worked at Manhattanville College's Cafeteria in Purchase, and worked in the kitchen at Harrison Meadows Country Club in Harrison. Currently, he's at Fox Lane Middle School in Bedford where he helps with hot food preparation, sets up the chips cart, and does the dishes.

He's also very serious about checking food expiration dates — "It's not a joke if someone gets sick," he said — and is especially sensitive to those with peanut allergies, checking packaging to make sure everyone stays safe.

Personality Plus

"We get a kick out of him," said Mary Vanzo, general manager for Whitson's Culinary Group, which manages the Fox Lane cafeteria. "He's got a wonderful personality and is great with the students."

She also found it endearing that when she hired him, he made a point of telling her about his Instagram — and had her follow him.

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Indeed, it's his social media posts where his personality — upbeat, optimistic and unfiltered — shines.

"I started my Instagram because I want to showcase to people that having gluten-free foods isn't bad, and that having celiac isn't bad," said Schultz. "You've just got to find the right place, make connections, go out and have fun."

His motto is "be positive, be happy and be yourself."

"Just because you have autism like I do or any other disability, you can prove people wrong and go above and beyond and do good things for yourself," he said.

His Instagram's reviews and interviews, where he hopes to inspire others to explore the New York food scene, are, admittedly, part of his own self-care.

For Schultz, who says he was a "foodie from Day One," food is more than just nourishment. It's about storytelling and connections. Connecting with the server you meet at a restaurant, connecting with the farmer at a farmers market, connecting with chefs and restaurant owners or connecting with people on a food tour.

He loves meeting people just as much as he loves food. And he's serious about what he orders, making sure the Diet Pepsi he ordered at our lunch at Lexington Square Cafe in Mount Kisco wasn't from a can. ("I hope it's not flat," he said, after the waiter walked away.)

With his reviews, he normally orders four entrees, samples them and takes the rest home. (On ours, he ordered two — and ate most of both — plus dessert.) Everything — including the Caesar salad with salmon (no croutons), gluten-free pasta Bolognese and the warm flourless double gooey chocolate cake — got a 10 out of 10, though the cake, which disappeared quickly, got the most effusive reaction. (The soda also was good and thankfully, not flat.)

At first, Schultz really wanted to be a restaurant consultant — he even created a PowerPoint presentation for his parents — but a chance conversation with the folks at Sam's of Gedney Way, pointed him to Instagram, which seemed easier and more realistic.

So far he's found his niche and is enthusiastic about doing more. Though he admits he's had struggles in the past, food has helped him find his way.

"Don't give up on your dreams," he stressed. "Focus on what you like to do. That's what Philip the Food Guy is all about."

Follow Philip the Food Guy

Website: philipthefoodguy.com

Instagram: [instagram.com/philip_the_food_guy](https://www.instagram.com/philip_the_food_guy)

April is Autism Awareness Month

The Arc Westchester Foundation, dedicated to enriching the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families, is hosting its annual event, "A Matter of Taste," April 30th at Glen Island Harbour Club in New Rochelle. This is the 18th year for the fundraiser, which brings together more than 20 area restaurants.

And yes, Philip The Food Guy will be there meeting, greeting and eating. The event runs from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.; tickets are available at arcwestchester.org/mot2025.

Jeanne Muchnick covers food and dining. Click [here](#) for her most recent articles and follow her latest dining adventures on Instagram [@jeannemuchnick](#) or via the [lohudfood newsletter](#).