



“We’re bringing the second-generation creativity, tying in young, fresh ideas with classic, traditional cuisine.”

— Hadley Shully

Clockwise from left: Hadley Shully, Jacob Shully, Nina Darling (holding Victory Darling), Scott Shully and Beth Shully (holding Clementine Darling).

ALL IN THE FAMILY

Shully’s Cuisine continues to grow with the help of the next generation.

BY JENNA KASHOU
PHOTOS BY DAVID SZYMANSKI

For the Shully family, every party is a story. A story that begins with getting to know each customer and their vision, and wraps with a perfectly orchestrated, utterly distinctive event that showcases the Shully’s Cuisine and Events team’s flair for food and hosting.

Over the past 35 years, Shully’s has been a household name in the metro Milwaukee area for gourmet catering. With the addition of three family members and two venues — The Watermark, which opened in 2013, and ATS (short for Across the Street, which it is) in 2016 — Shully’s is building its brand to include the family’s unique approach to a total event experience, personalized for every client.

Beth and Scott Shully started Shully’s Cuisine 35 years ago in the lower level of their home. Beth had prior catering experience and recognized that Scott boasted unique talents as a chef. They quickly cemented their roles as partners, Scott handling all things cuisine and Beth tackling finances and logistics. Sitting down with all five family members decades later, it’s obvious that their distinct personalities give this successful business its flavor. There’s a natural ease among them and a witty banter, with an air of friendly competition. Beth welcomes me with a hospitable embrace, and when it was time to start the interview, Scott chimed in first and proudly announced his age and title, giddy like a kid on the first day of school, his affable smile and gentle eyes taming his towering presence and booming voice.

But this *is* a family affair. With her nurturing demeanor and patient tone, Beth delicately reminds Scott to allow the children to do most of the talking. The effort quickly and comically backfired when her offspring tease her about not being able to articulate her thoughts.

Nina Darling, 33, is the eldest of Beth and Scott’s brood and was the first to join the family business in 2015 as an event planner. Shortly after, Jacob Shully, 32, moved back from New York and joined Shully’s as general manager. Hadley Shully, 30, is the baby of the family and self-proclaimed “wild card.” She

studied at the International Culinary Center in New York (crashing on Jacob’s couch) and worked in Italy and Chicago before she joined Shully’s as a sous-chef.

In Chicago, Hadley honed her skills at top restaurants like The Girl and the Goat and Roister. Unabashedly, Scott calls her talent still untapped. Hadley’s mischievous grin tells it all — she’s the charming, risk-taking little sister. In fact, all of the children’s personalities are in line with the common traits of birth order. Nina is conscientious and a natural leader, and soft-spoken Jacob is the laid-back peacekeeper.

For the Shully offspring, joining the family business happened organically. They already understood the trade well, so they were able to create roles that fit a need. Jacob knew that operations would hum with some tweaks in procedures and increased marketing efforts. Hadley spices up the kitchen with creative direction, and Nina uses her training as a teacher to take charge of planning and creating new community events.

Beth and Scott made their children go through the same interview process as all of their employees. “They’re right in the trenches with the other employees and have earned their respect by proving that they’re willing to put in the time and work hard,” says Scott.

Working with family, especially for long hours in a high-pressure setting, can be



emotionally charged. “Addressing issues honestly and quickly is the only way [we] are able to operate effectively as a unit,” says Hadley. Beth adds, “We’re still learning how to talk to each other respectfully when dealing with conflict.” But both Scott and Beth stress that adding the new additions to the leadership team hasn’t been difficult, just different. “Backing away and allowing the kids to make a mistake and then using it as a teaching experience has been the biggest challenge,” Scott notes.

One well worth the effort, when Hadley looks at her parents and siblings and gushes, “I just love that I get to work with my best friends every day.”

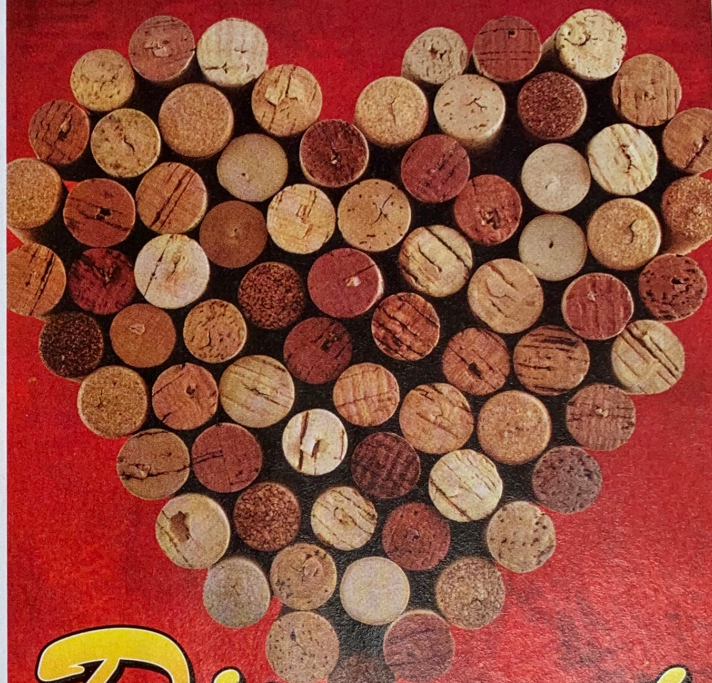
The family simultaneously erupts into laughter when Jacob makes a joke about his parents’ inevitable retirement, which, Beth and Scott reveal, will happen sooner rather than later. They haven’t decided on a timeline just yet.

For now, the focus is on perfecting an already thriving business, while smoothing internal efficiencies. Jacob, Nina and Hadley bring a fresh approach to both operations and events, introducing new software systems, and ideas such as a Harry Potter themed pop-up dinner, wine and beer pairing dinners with local makers and cooking classes held at ATS. “We’re bringing the second-generation creativity, tying in young, fresh ideas with classic, traditional cuisine,” says Hadley.

The Shully’s team is also working on the next chapter in their story — personal and professional — with Hadley’s wedding at The Watermark in June. Hadley and her fiancé Daniel met four years ago working at Shully’s. Not surprisingly, Jacob and Nina will be in the wedding. **MKE**

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