

**AND
THE
WINNER
IS!**



Margaret McSweeney
Is Inducted into the
TASTE AWARDS
Hall of Fame

*Hair and make-up
by Rachel Reiman*



Viking Ambassador Jaime Laurita at the Viking showroom at the Merchandise Mart in Chicago. Margaret McSweeney is a consultant for Viking Range LLC.



“Margaret McSweeney is the kindest and most honest woman that you will ever meet. Her heart is made of pure gold and she leaves a trail of gold dust wherever she goes. Don’t let her fool you because under that Southern Derby hat and string of pearls lies a very savvy businesswoman who is a mover and a shaker. She is the ultimate connector. Somehow things seem to fall literally in her lap. I think her dad navigates from up above. I just love being on this journey with her as long as she’s not driving the car... [as the song says,] ‘Jesus please take the wheel!’ What the world needs now is more people like her. Unfortunately, in this case, there is truly only one. I savor each moment in her midst.”

—Chef Jaime Laurita

Tales of a Culinary Queen

STORY BY LISA STAMOS | PHOTOGRAPHY BY LINDA M. BARRETT

ON MARCH 9, 2020, MARGARET MCSWEENEY, a long-time Barrington area resident, will be inducted into the TASTE AWARDS Hall of Fame. She will gather with friends and industry colleagues before the awards show in Beverly Hills, California, to celebrate and of course, to make introductions—one of many the hallmarks of this successful entrepreneur and the award-winning creator and podcaster of Kitchen Chat. McSweeney is thankful that her dear friend Barbara Lazaroff, ASID designer, restaurateur, and co-founder of the Wolfgang Puck brand, will be celebrating with her.

Her journey has not been easy. She is an eight-year cancer survivor and last year, broke her knee and then learned from her doctor that she must live on a plant-based diet to address some health concerns. Her new diet has inspired her and brought significant health benefits. Her go-to restaurant in Barrington is Pine Food Company on Cook Street. There, she can order a variety of vegan meals and she recognizes Alina Jaskowiak, one of its owners, as a fellow female entrepreneur. “They have the best vegan quiche! We are lucky to have Pine Food here.”

She also sees herself “an adult orphan” after losing both of her parents, and her brother, Randy. Her life seems a miracle, though. “I’m not even supposed to be here,” McSweeney said. “My dad, at age 30, before I was born, was diagnosed with cancer. Being that this was before chemotherapy, in the ‘50s, he was told by his doctor to get to the hospital in the morning for surgery, and, to get his affairs in order,” she said. But he survived. McSweeney calls these recurring miracles—small and large—hugs from heaven.

Her life is propelled by extraordinary serendipity and she seems to float over obstacles with a profound sense of faith and imagined good outcomes. She counts her husband, David, as central to her success. “Dave is such an encouragement and blessing to me. He is my forever love. We celebrated our 29th anniversary in February,” McSweeney said.

What makes McSweeney’s culinary journey so smooth? We asked her producer, Lynn Gentile, to offer insight. Gentile and McSweeney met years ago through a mutual friend. When Kitchen Chat was being developed and when help was needed, Gentile stepped in as a producer. “Margaret is good at what she does; she is 100% authentic and people respond to that,” Gentile



A Kitchen Chat and cooking demonstration with Chef Gale Gand was hosted by Viking Ambassador Jaime Laurita at the Viking showroom at the Merchandise Mart in Chicago.

said. “She gets the stories no one else gets in her interviews because she deals in a currency of trust. And her faith is strong. She sees no barriers to reaching a prominent chef or celebrity. She will call them directly. Both of her parents were talented and authored books, and they taught her that no matter who you are with, to treat them with respect and to share from the heart.”

EAT, TALK, WRITE

“They say that what you were doing in third grade is what you should be doing in your life,” McSweeney said. “For me, it was eating, talking, and writing. I’ve written five books of inspirational nonfiction while raising my family, and I also had a column with the Daily Herald for many years for Inverness. I wanted to start the Kitchen Chat podcasts to understand, as an adult, what my father’s joy of cooking was all about. I also needed to get out of a sad place after writing my fifth book called “Aftermath: Growing in Grace through Grief”. I was grieving the loss of my brother, and it was tough to write—but important to write. Getting through grief. I had also been diagnosed and treated with breast cancer, and I needed to find my happy place, and that was Kitchen Chat.” It was also a tangible way for her to honor her father.

CREATING HER PODCAST

Having no experience in podcasting, and as a former Wall Street banker, McSweeney figured out how to start her podcasts at the most basic level. “I started literally with a computer and Skype program,” she said. “The key she says is to be collaborative and to be a connector. “Follow your passion, find strategic partnerships, and encourage others.” Today, she has professional recording studio equipment in her home for Kitchen Chat. She also travels to meet with chefs from coast to coast.

She has recorded Kitchen Chats in locations ranging from a make-shift coat room at a conference to the sparkling Viking showroom at the Merchandise Mart in Chicago. No matter the circumstances, or the location, one thing remains the same. “Food connects us, and the kitchen is the heart of the home,” she said. And, McSweeney’s gracious and encouraging personality seems to be the central ingredient in her success. Join McSweeney as she dreams of bringing Kitchen Chat to a larger audience while encouraging others to follow their dreams, too. As she says, “Savor the day!” To learn more, visit kitchenchat.info 

Editor’s Note: Margaret McSweeney chose five chefs who represent some of the milestones along her culinary journey and she shares memories of her experiences with them. Their recipes are courtesy of their book publishers.

“Margaret McSweeney is also a longtime member of IACP, the International Association of Culinary Professionals. She brings passion and a collaborative mentoring spirit to the highly respected organization. IACP would not be the same without its highly-engaged members like Margaret McSweeney.”

–Nancy Wall Hopkins, President of IACP.



Barbara Lazaroff

“My friend Margaret has created a rare, homespun, yet intimate interview style that focuses on the heart of why and how hospitality professionals have dedicated their lives to creating stellar food, service, and style experiences for their guests. She’s your engaging, yet savvy next door neighbor over a cup of coffee...getting all the great news and a bit of gossip, as well. Smart and kindhearted, no one can say no when Margaret asks for a Kitchen Chat! The interviews are amusing, informative, intelligent, and occasionally quirky. Who wouldn’t want to talk to a friend like that? Her love of food and those who love food and wine is always bubbling over with a sense of celebration!”

—Barbara Lazaroff, ASID Designer, Restaurateur, and co-founder of the Wolfgang Puck brand.

“We are very proud to be awarding Margaret McSweeney yet another TASTE AWARD this year for her fantastic work in covering the culinary world. She brings insight, creativity, and charm to her interviews and program, as well as a broad variety of featured personalities. For over 11 years, the TASTE AWARDS have been the premier awards that specifically focus on the year’s best in food, fashion, and lifestyle programs including on television, in film, streaming, online video, on radio, and in podcasts. As such, it has welcomed celebrities and producers from studios such as the Food Network, Bravo, Sony, Disney, HBO, Netflix, Amazon Prime, YouTube, Lifetime, PBS, NBC, ABC, CBS, the CW, and more.”

–TASTE AWARDS Spokesperson.



Cynthia Rowley

“My daughter Kit and I had so much fun on Margaret’s Kitchen Chat and have stayed in touch ever since. Can’t break the Barrington bond!”

–American Lifestyle and Fashion Designer Cynthia Rowley



A recent family wedding for Melissa McSweeney. From left: Katie McSweeney, Mus'ab Sabri, Melissa McSweeney Sabri, Margaret McSweeney, and David McSweeney. PHOTO: TRUE GRACE PHOTOGRAPHY.



Margaret McSweeney's inspirational father, Dr. Claude H. Rhea, Jr.

MARGARET'S INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESS

Lead with your strengths. Be kind. Always be your authentic self. Connect with others in your field of interest. Attend conferences and networking opportunities. Reach out on LinkedIn and Facebook. Ask others how you can help them and exceed expectations. Don't be afraid to ask people to help you.



Margaret McSweeney with photographer Linda M. Barrett.



Chef Stephanie Izard

“Don’t be afraid to change a recipe around and make it your own. Understand why an ingredient is in a dish.” – CHEF STEPHANIE IZARD

Kitchen Chats: August 6, 2016, Kitchen Chat at Macy’s Culinary Studio; August 19, 2018 Kitchen Chat in the Middleby Residential Showroom at the Merchandise Mart.

Chef Izard’s three top tips for the home chef:

- Make sure you get your pan hot enough before you put your protein in it.
- Taste-test your spices on cooked chicken or potatoes.
- Think about leftovers. Send your friends home with gifts of food. Have Chinese takeout boxes to give for the leftovers.

SHRIMP TOSTADAS

There are two tricks to cooking great shrimp: butterfly them—or slicing them almost completely halfway through—and marinating them just before cooking. They get a ton of flavor, inside and out, and cook quickly, which means they can keep their nice, firm texture and not get rubbery. Makes 8 tostadas.

SHRIMP:

1 1/2 cups canola oil
 3 tablespoons sambal oelek
 1 tablespoon minced garlic
 1 1/2 pounds extra-large
 (26/30 count) shrimp, peeled, deveined, and butterflied
 1/2 cup mayonnaise
 2 1/4 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
 1 1/4 tablespoons Kimchi Sauce

SLAW:

2 1/2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
 Small pinch of salt
 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
 2 cups shredded green cabbage
 1/4 cup pickled red onions

Marinate the shrimp: In a medium bowl, whisk together the oil, sambal oelek, and garlic. Toss in the shrimp to coat and marinate in the fridge for 1 hour. Heat a large nonstick sauté pan over high heat. Add the shrimp and sear for 2 minutes without tossing. Cook for another 3 minutes, tossing, until the shrimp is bright orange and opaque. Transfer the shrimp to a sheet pan and allow them to cool completely. In a medium bowl, whisk together the mayonnaise, lemon juice, and sauce. When the shrimp are cool, toss them in the flavored mayo to coat.



Chef Stephanie Izard. PHOTO: JENNY GRIMM

As the first woman to win Iron Chef and Top Chef, Chef Stephanie Izard is a trailblazer in the culinary world. She is a mom, a James Beard Award winning chef, an entrepreneur, restaurateur, a cookbook author, and a genuinely kind person. Her four Chicago restaurants, Girl & the Goat, Little Goat Diner, Duck Duck Goat, and Cabra Cevicheria, are all part of the Boka Restaurant Group. She will be opening a new Girl & the Goat in Los Angeles this year. Chef Stephanie’s last name, “Izard” means a type of goat. Chef Izard has around 450 employees. She is happy to see a lot of talented women coming into the kitchens and restaurants. Her advice for those who are pursuing a culinary career is to find the place where they are most excited to be. Chef Izard has a heart for charity and launched Fulton Market Harvest Fest several years ago to showcase food in Chicago and to benefit Pilot Light, a non-profit helping to bring food education to every child in every school. Her most recent cookbook, “Gather & Graze: 120 Favorite Recipes for Tasty Good Times” is about having fun while making something tasty to eat.

Mix the slaw: In a large bowl, whisk together the vinegar, sugar, salt, and olive oil. Add the cabbage, pickled onions, and cilantro and toss to coat.

Build the tostadas: Divide the avocado mash evenly among the masa rounds. Top each tostada with the dressed shrimp, a handful of the cabbage salad, and a sprinkle of the pickled peppers.



MEET THE CHEFS

Chef Carla Hall

“Do what you love and else will follow.” – CHEF CARLA HALL

Kitchen Chats: March 31, 2014 by phone from my kitchen in Barrington Hills; March 22, 2017 in Louisville at IACP conference; October 15, 2018 in Chef Hall’s New York City apartment where she cooked Shrimp and Grits; and June 20, 2019 in Middleby Residential Showroom at the Merchandise Mart where we cooked biscuits.

Chef Carla Hall’s top three tips for making biscuits:

- Use all-purpose flour and Crisco.
- Use frozen butter to grate and toss into flour.
- Use your sense of smell as your time clock for when the biscuits are ready. It’s always exactly 14 minutes.

SEA ISLAND SHRIMP & GRITS

GRITS:

- 1 cup stone-ground grits
- 1 bay leaf
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon fresh thyme leaves

SHRIMP:

- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 pound large shrimp, peeled and deveined with tails on
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1/2 onion, diced
- 1 green bell pepper, seeded and finely diced
- 2 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- 1 teaspoon chile flakes
- 2 plum tomatoes, cored and finely diced
- 3 tablespoons fresh flat-leaf parsley, chopped

For the grits: Bring 4-1/2 cups water to a boil in a medium saucepan over medium heat. While whisking, add the grits in a slow, steady stream. Whisk in the bay leaf and 1 teaspoon salt. Reduce the heat to medium-low and continue whisking until the grits are thick and creamy, 40 to 45 minutes. Stir in the thyme leaves and 1 teaspoon black pepper. Season with salt. Cover and keep warm over very low heat, whisking occasionally. I like my grits loose, so I add water if they start to stiffen. For the shrimp: Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Season the shrimp with salt and pepper. Working in batches, add the shrimp to the skillet and sear until just opaque, about 2 minutes per



Margaret McSweeney and Chef Carla Hall.

Chef Carla Hall resonates happiness from her soul in the kitchen. She makes cooking fun, and her friendship has brought such joy to my life. Her latest cookbook, “Carla Hall’s Soul Food” was hot off the press, and she gave me the third copy of the book. Chef Hall dedicated this special cookbook to her late father, George Hall. We both were blessed by fathers who loved to cook. Chef Hall is on a mission to have soul food recognized as an official cuisine. She prepared her Sea Island Shrimp and Grits recipe from the cookbook. She didn’t put any dairy into the grits, only water and a bay leaf. Chef Hall encourages everyone to think of soul food as something that is fresh with lots of seasonal vegetables. Chef Laurita and I had fun making biscuits with Chef Hall and Chadwick Boyd last summer during their “Biscuit Time” tour.

side. Transfer to a plate. Reduce the heat to medium and add the onion and bell pepper. Cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and chile flakes and cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Season with salt and pepper. Add the tomatoes and cook, gently folding, for 1 minute. Return the shrimp and any accumulated juices to the skillet and toss just until well combined. Divide the grits among serving plates and top with the shrimp mixture. Garnish with the parsley and serve immediately. Serves 4.



MEET THE CHEFS

Chef Jaime Laurita

“Cook with love and cook without fear. Fear is an ingredient that you don’t want to taste.” - CHEF JAIME LAURITA

Kitchen Chat on May 24, 2018, in the Middleby Residential Showroom in the Merchandise Mart, Chicago. We cooked Chef Jaime Laurita’s Risotto.

Chef Jaime Laurita’s top three tips for the home chef:

- Step into the kitchen with a smile and good intentions.
- Go organic and use ingredients when they are living their best life.
- Prepare. Prepare. Prepare. The more preparation you have, the better the recipe will come out.

Chef Jaime Laurita is like a brother to me. In fact, he and my late brother, Randy, share the same birthday. In 2013, Lisa Stamos of QB and Rebecca Darr, CEO of WINGS, introduced me to Chef Laurita to record a Kitchen Chat with him to promote an upcoming WINGS event. As Chef Laurita was sharing highlights of his culinary career with me in his beautiful kitchen and speaking aloud of his dream to one day become a brand ambassador for Viking Range, a loud clap of thunder shook the house during a storm.

In 2017, his dream came true at the National Restaurant Show when we ran into my former next-door neighbor who at that time happened to be the Chairman of Middleby Corporation, the parent company of Viking. And the rest is history. As the Creative Director of Middleby Residential, Chef Laurita has designed three elegant showrooms in Chicago, Manhattan, and Orange County, California. He is a Renaissance Man and has a keen understanding of hospitality, design, luxury, entertaining, and music. When people walk into his home in Chicago, they say that it’s like being invited into a place that they don’t want to leave.

For the past two years, Chef Laurita and I have been co-hosting Kitchen Chat together in the Middleby Residential Showroom in the Merchandise Mart. We are an unlikely pairing. He is a Rockstar Chef and has traveled the world with Madonna, Sting, Steven Tyler, and even wrote a cookbook with Sarah McLachlan. He calls us “Tattoos and Pearls”. Chef Laurita has always exuded that same joy in the kitchen as my father, and he has taught me great culinary techniques to elevate my cooking.

I prepared my first Risotto dish with Chef Laurita and learned that perfectly toasting the rice first is key to making a successful risotto. Toasting allows the rice to better absorb the liquid. Keep spinning the rice and onions together. Once the rice is releasing its starch on the pan that is a sign to add your hot broth to the hot rice. The perfect risotto takes around 18 minutes to prepare.



Chef Jaime Laurita and Chef Gale Gand cook together for a Kitchen Chat.

CHEF JAIME LAURITA’S RISOTTO RECIPE

Yield: 6-8
Prep time: 5 minutes
Total time: 18 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 3 cups dry risotto rice
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 4-6 tablespoon butter
- 64 ounces chicken stock
- 1 cup white wine
- Salt & pepper

DIRECTIONS

Heat stock in stock pan to a rolling boil. In skillet, heat oil on medium and add chopped onion. When onion appears translucent add rice.

Toast by moving clockwise continually until the rice becomes lighter and golden brown. Add wine. When lines of starch appear start adding hot stock two ladles at a time. As the stock absorbs, continue to add two ladles at a time continually stirring the rice clockwise in the pan. After stock is fully worked into the rice turn off the heat. Finish with roasted vegetables, butter, parmesan Reggiano or ingredients of your choice.



MEET THE CHEFS

Chef Anne Willan

“What greater love can there be for someone than to cook for them!”

– ANNE WILLAN

Kitchen Chat: December 15, 2015 in her California kitchen.

Anne Willan's top tips for the home chef:

- Have a good whisk, a copper pot, and an excellent set of knives.

SAUCE HOLLANDAISE

3/4 cup butter

3 tablespoons water

3 egg yolks

Salt and white pepper

Juice of 1/2 lemon, or to taste

Hollandaise sauce is served with poached fish, vegetables, and eggs. The recipe makes about 1 cup sauce.

Melt the butter, skim froth from the surface, and let cool to tepid. In a small saucepan, whisk the water and egg yolks with a little salt and pepper for 30 seconds until light. Set the pan over low heat or in a water bath and whisk constantly until the mixture is creamy and thick enough for the whisk to leave a trail on the base of the pan. The base of the pan should never be more than hand-hot.

Take from the heat and whisk in the tepid butter, a few drops at a time. Note: Do not add the butter too fast or the sauce may curdle. When the sauce has started to thicken, the butter can be added a little faster. Do not add the milky sediment at the bottom of the butter. When all the butter is added stir in the lemon juice and taste for seasoning, adding salt, pepper, and lemon juice to taste. Hollandaise is served warm, not hot, and it should be kept warm in a water bath to avoid curdling.

If hollandaise does curdle, this is almost always because it is too hot: Take it at once from the heat and whisk in an ice cube. If this is not successful, the sauce may be started again by whisking an egg yolk and a tablespoon of water over low heat until creamy, then gradually whisking in the curdled mixture, drop by drop. However, if the sauce is badly curdled the egg yolks cook into granules and the mixture must be discarded. Very occasionally hollandaise separates through undercooking, never thickening properly. If so, try whisking in a tablespoon of boiling water. If hollandaise is too thick, add 1 table-spoon tepid water to make it lighter.



Margaret McSweeney and Chef Anne Willan.

Anne Willan is a culinary giant. She founded the legendary Ecole de Cuisine La Varenne, a cooking school in Paris that trained many of the world's great chefs and cookbook authors. La Varenne was one of the first cooking schools in France to offer simultaneous instruction in French and English and accredited professional culinary degrees. With over 30 published books, Chef Willan is truly one of the world's preeminent authorities on French cooking. I first met her in 2014 at the International Association of Culinary Professionals conference in Chicago. In early 2015, Anne graciously invited me to her kitchen in California. Chef Laurita joined me for that special occasion. I was overcome with emotion when I saw her beautiful copper pots and pans dangling over the kitchen island. One small pot looked exactly like the one my father would use to make Hollandaise sauce on Saturdays. Later in 2015, I joined Chef Willan again in her kitchen to film a Kitchen Chat about her book “Secrets from the La Varenne Kitchen: 50 Essential Recipes Every Cook Needs to Know”. Watch for her new book, “Women in the Kitchen”.



MEET THE CHEFS

Chef Jacques Pépin

“Food and conversation in the kitchen. That’s the glue that holds the family together.” CHEF JACQUES PÉPIN

Three Kitchen Chat interviews via phone from my kitchen in Barrington Hills: September 28, 2015; March 14, 2016; and September 19, 2017.

Chef Pépin’s top three tips for the home chef:

- Drink a glass of wine before you cook.
- Play some nice music.
- Be flexible when you go to the market. Always look for nice ingredients

RICOTTA QUENELLES

A quenelle is a football-shaped dumpling. These light and delicate quenelles take only a few seconds to prepare in a food processor (or in a bowl by hand), and they can be made a couple of days ahead of serving. Be sure to use good whole-milk ricotta cheese. The quenelles can be sautéed, as they are here, or baked in a cream sauce. They are a great accompaniment for grilled meat, poultry, or fish.

QUENELLES:

- 1 cup whole-milk ricotta cheese
- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 large egg
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 tablespoons shredded fresh basil leaves
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1½ tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
- Minced fresh chives (optional)

For the quenelles: Combine all the ingredients in a food processor and process for 10 seconds or mix in a bowl with a whisk.

Bring about 1½ inches of water to about 190 degrees (just under a boil) in a large saucepan. Using two large spoons or a ¼-cup metal measuring cup, scoop up and form 8 oval-shaped quenelles (about 3 tablespoons each), dropping them into the simmering water as you go. Poach for about 10 minutes, rolling the quenelles over in the water halfway through the cooking so they cook on both sides. Remove with a slotted spoon and drop into a bowl of ice water. When the quenelles are cold, drain and refrigerate until ready to serve.



Chef Jacques Pépin and Margaret McSweeney. PHOTO: TOM HOPKINS

Chef Jacques Pépin encapsulates the importance of cooking with loved ones in the kitchen. He has cooked on TV with his daughter, Claudine and his granddaughter, Shorey. He co-wrote “A Grandfather’s Lessons: In the Kitchen with Shorey” with his granddaughter. Growing up, I wish that I had taken the time to cook with my father. During one of our Kitchen Chats, Chef Pépin helped me put that lost opportunity into perspective. He said, “You regret not to have been in the kitchen with your father, but you still are probably there with him in the sense that the memory of those dishes you had as a child stay with you for the rest of your life.” Chef Pépin is the first recipient of the Julia Child Foundation Award. He and Julia had a PBS show together, “Julia and Jacques Cooking at Home.” Chef Pépin prepared the last dinner in Julia’s kitchen with her before her kitchen was disassembled and donated to the Smithsonian Institute. One of the dishes he made for her was Dover Sole.

At serving time, heat the butter and oil in a large nonstick skillet. Add the quenelles and sauté, covered, over medium heat for 3½ to 4 minutes. Turn them over, sprinkle with the cheese, cover, and cook for about 4 minutes longer. Sprinkle with the chives if desired. Serve 4 as an appetizer.