

Chef Mary Wills of Good Fork catering succeeds by taking risks

By SALI McSHERRY

Shed the flannel pajamas and the ponytail, put on midnight black eyeliner, a vixen's dress, sinfully red lipstick and stilettos, because ladies—you've been invited to a Sexy Fork event.

Referred to as the "saucier, sister company to the Good Fork," you only have to meet Chef Mary Wills once and you'll be hooked by her devilish smile and gleeful laugh, her sense of making every day glorious and her breadth of knowledge in the kitchen.

It's all about bringing the romance back into cooking, Chef Mary said, combined with a nod to sustainability—using local produce for her farm-to-table practice at her catering company, the Good Fork.

She says there's a thin line between craziness and genius. "Craig's List is the answer to just about everything," except of course, when it isn't. But it was a listing she posted years ago that got her in the back door when she didn't know much, but she knew enough. The wind moves her—there was the stint as a chef on

real estate giant Jeffrey Greene's yacht in Sag Harbor, two episodes as an assistant on NBC's "Chopping Block" with three-star Michelin Chef Marco Pierre White, and party planning for Bruce Willis.

She's learned, "A good chef has to take risks."

It's been one big learning curve for the woman who was chosen (while attending the Italian Culinary Academy at the French Culinary Institute in New York City) to work under Master Chef Pier Giorio Parini at Il Povero Diavolo in Torriana in 2007.

She learned Italian in a breath.

Chef Mary, now age 30, also performed an externship at Alma La Scuola Di Cucina in Parma, Italy under three-star Michelin Chef Gualterio Marchesi, Colorno Castle.

And then there was the spell at Le Cirque, where the pristine kitchen is as big as a football field, shiny copper pans bob from the pegs, building a salad is like architecture, and 30 grams of Galilee Golden Osetra Caviar will set you back \$195.

Following her successful gamble, she's

home in Independence with her husband, who she's known since high school, and she's ready to create new adventures—that's where the Sexy Fork saunters in on the Good Fork's back.

And where you'll find, as Chef Mary puts it, "savvy stellar" women, laughing it up, sipping wine, and feasting on savories like curried carrot and chickpea crostinis, roasted beet and local goat cheese flatbread, pulled pork bignes, grass-fed cheese, shots of roasted cauliflower soup, "provocative" pasta with in-season vegetables and "naughty" gnocchi with lamb ragout.

Chef Mary's interest in sustainability comes from her experiences in Italy, where she caught fresh fish like Sgombro in the Adriatic Sea and cooked it that day.

Her concept of the simple supper club, which she also refers to as a "social club, underground dining, the anti-restaurant," begins at a private residence or nearby organic farm, with "wine served in Ball jars, local food served family-style in clay pots," with everyone sitting around wooden tables in a relaxed atmosphere.

On top of those credentials, Chef Mary specializes in Tuscan cuisine and has taught culinary arts to tourists in Luca, Pisa and Florence. In the summer of 2012, she is hosting a culinary adventure winding down the Amalfi Coast.

Her catered affairs are becoming legendary, from simple and straightforward, to extrava-



Chef Mary Wills, of the Good Fork.

gant beyond words. For Chef Mary, "it's all about telling a story on a plate."

For more information, and a schedule of upcoming events, visit www.thegoodfork.net or call 330.605.8368.

Sexy Fork events
June 3, 10, July 15, 29
August 26

Simple Supper Club
June 26, July 17,
Aug. 21, 28

Farmers' Market Demonstrations
May 17, 21, 28, July 16, 19

For more information on these events visit www.thegoodfork.net



Michael Matoney, Owen DeJohn and Michael DeJohn (Night Fore Movies)



John Schindler and John Berger (Night Fore Movies)



Kathy Schindler and Jan Morgan (Night Fore Movies)



Sue Tager, Liz Linder and Pam Murphy (Night Fore Movies)



Dorothy and Zaire Stevens (Night Fore Movies)



Erin Diffenderfer and Marty Krivanka (Night Fore Movies)

New Directions "Night Fore Movies"

From elephants and the circus, to prom night, mob hits, fast action and a funny bunny, guests at Night Fore Movies to benefit New Directions had their pick of movie magic.

Held at Chagrin Cinemas, with bags of buttered popcorn in tow, guests entered the movie theater and also enjoyed the batting cages and miniature golf at the Golf Dome.

And then it was time for the annual family grill-out, with hamburgers, hot dogs and chicken.

More than 500 guests attended the event and raised more than \$50,000 for New Directions, according to Executive Director Mike Matoney.

The raffle featured two airline tickets, a suite at the Lake County Captains baseball stadium, a brand new bicycle and a grand LCD TV.

New Directions continues to provide life-changing treatment to chemically dependent adolescents and their families who are dealing with emotional, behavioral and psychiatric needs. STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY SALI McSHERRY



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