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## Jeanie Roland, Chef and Owner

March 2022

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"My first job was as a dishwasher at the General Stanton Inn," recalls Jeanie Roland, owner and executive chef at Ella's Food and Drink in Westerly. "There were two women chefs that ran that kitchen. I thought, 'Oh, this is crazy! I can do this.'"

Fast forward to today: she has seven prestigious James Beard nominations to her credit, two highly successful restaurants (The Perfect Caper in Florida and Ella's Food and Drink in Westerly), has appeared on Iron Chef, and actually did beat Bobby Flay on his Food Network TV show. She even gave a private cooking class to Westerly's most famous resident, Taylor Swift, and her BFF Lorde.

The determined chef graduated from the Culinary Institute of America back when the world-class cooking school was run more like a boot camp. "When I was at CIA in 1992, if your hair wasn't perfect, or if your shoes weren't shined, you get sent back to your room," she recalls.

Back in 2002, Jeanie was a pioneer in the food industry. The Perfect Caper sourced only cruelty-free farmed meats and organic produce, practices she brought to by Ella's in Westerly when she opened in 2012. She was one of the first restauranteurs to partner with Ariane Daguin, the leading distributor of sustainably raised and humane farming practices, to carry cruelty-free meat and foie gras.

Jeanie's food fuses traditional French cooking with an Asian flair. It's a nod to her early experience as a corporate chef, when she cooked in far-flung locales like Hong Kong, China, Malaysia, and Singapore. Influences of Italian cooking are also evident on Ella's menu, inspired by Westerly's large Italian-American community. Many Italian specialty items like pasta, mozzarella, and ricotta are made in-house.



Ever mindful of the women who pioneered the way, she named the restaurant Ella's as an homage to fellow woman owner/chef Eleanor Capizzano, whose eponymous restaurant originally stood at the Tower Street location.

Not simply content to own two restaurants (and run two kitchens), Jeanie is also a writer. Her first cookbook, Butter Love and Cream, was "something I wanted to do for years," she says. Called "an accessible foodie cookbook," it's a culinary trip through Jeanie's life, from her childhood to becoming one of the top women chefs in the United States. Recipes range from the delicious simplicity of a root beer float (her childhood favorite) to more complex flavor combinations like lobster pho (a dish served at her restaurants). All the recipes are approachable to a kitchen novice, but experienced cooks will delight in the diverse range of dishes on display.

Jeanie's second cookbook, The Perfect Caper Home Cooking, came out in December, and is a treasure trove of classic recipes, refined over twenty years from her two restaurants, and includes family recipes. Like Butter Love and Cream, the dishes are sophisticated but remain user-friendly to the home cook. "My focus when writing The Perfect Caper Home Cooking was to help that weekday kitchen warrior with great everyday recipes that can be used in a variety of different ways," she says.

Passion and determination are just two of Jeanie's hallmarks. "It takes a lot of guts and conviction and belief in yourself to open a restaurant," she says.

"I begged my parents to be a chef since I was 14. And they told me no. My dad didn't want me to work this hard in my life. He wanted a better life for his daughter. And I told him I wanted to do something I love every day. That's what propelled me," she continues. "If you have a dream doing something that you love, stop at nothing to attain it!"

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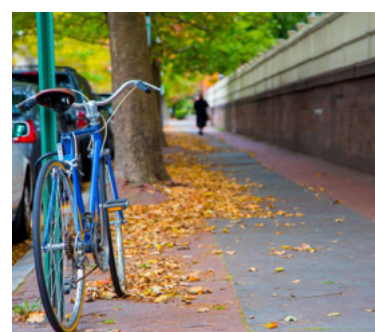
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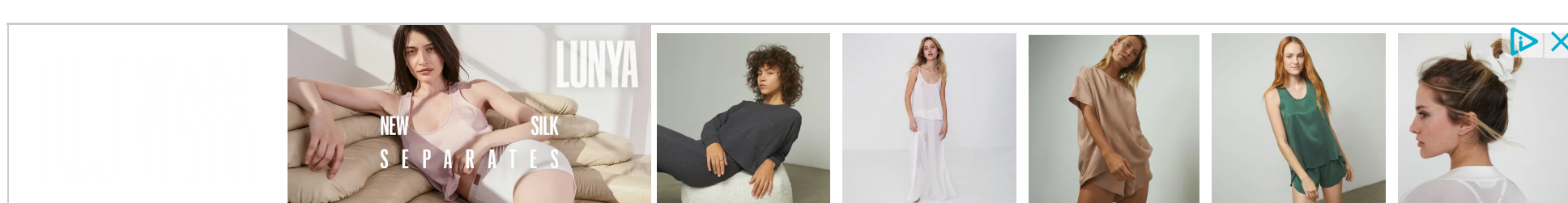
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