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GIRL POWER

*Celebrating Culinary
Businesses Owned by Women*

San Diego-based restaurateur Tracy Borkum Photo Credit: Urban Kitchen Group

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GIRL POWER

Celebrating Culinary Businesses Owned by Women

By Frank Sabatini Jr.

Women have been integral to the restaurant industry for centuries, though working mostly in a variety of subordinate roles in earlier times. It was only until about 60 years ago did they begin rising above their common secondary positions to become head chefs, brewers, distillers, CEOs, and founders of restaurant ventures across the nation.

Thanks to pioneers such as Julia Child, who demonstrated remarkable business savvy with her French-inspired cuisine, plus Alice Waters of the famous Chez Panisse restaurant in Berkeley, Ruth Fertel of the well-established Ruth's Chris Steak House, and many other talented women—the dining industry is no longer exclusively “a man’s world.”

In honor of Women’s History Month this March, we’ve pointed our forks and raised our glasses to some of San Diego’s notable examples of eating and drinking businesses that are owned and operated by women.

Hob Nob Hill

Bankers Hill



(Courtesy photo)

Tania Warchol at Hob Nob Hill

As one of San Diego’s oldest and most cherished American-style restaurants, Hob Nob Hill operates also as a bakery and full cocktail bar. Founded in 1944 under a different name by a married couple from Kansas, it has been owned for the past 30 years by Tania Warchol, who kept all of the original recipes.

During the pandemic, she upgraded the restaurant in a modern-vintage style. “I wanted to keep the old vibe so that you still get that classic diner touch,” she said.

When asked for the secrets to her longstanding success, she replied, “Don’t ever give up, despite the challenges. Be persistent and leave good enough alone when the business is successful.” 2271 First Ave., 619-239-8176; hobnobhill.com.

Casa de Pico

La Mesa

Shortly after Diane Powers lost her lease in Old Town’s Bazaar del Mundo in San Diego, she moved her spirited Mexican restaurant to Grossmont Center in 2005. That same year, she relocated her other Old Town restaurant, Casa di Bandini, to Carlsbad while keeping in place nearby Casa Guadalajara.



(Facebook)

Celebrity Chef Maeve Rochford

Moving Casa de Pico proved advantageous for the tireless restaurateur, given that the business became known for having the largest outdoor dining patio in La Mesa. It was also awarded Best Restaurant in 2021 by the East County Chamber of Commerce.

The property in total has a 500-seat capacity. And according to Powers, the menu remains famous for its sizzling fajitas, enchilada Suizas, and the carne asada-shrimp combo plate. 5500 Grossmont Center Drive, 619-463-3267; casadepico.com.

Sugar and Scribe

La Jolla

Chef Maeve Rochford enjoyed the national limelight and a \$50,000 prize several years ago when she won Season 2 of the Food Network’s “Holiday Baking Championship.” She is also the owner and executive chef at Sugar and Scribe, a lauded restaurant and bakery where you can score some of the best scratch-made croissants, custom cakes and petite fours in the area.

Her menu doesn’t exclude other gourmet delights such as lemon curd pancakes, cast-iron quiche, barbecue turkey club sandwiches and more. 7660 Fay Ave., 858-274-1733; sugarandscribe.com.

You & Yours Distilling Co.

East Village



(Courtesy photo)

Distiller Laura Johnson

Contrary to common assumption, there is a growing number of female distillers throughout the country. And Laura Johnson is one of them.

She founded this 2,300-square-foot urban distillery in San Diego eight years ago, and has since built a reputable brand featuring exquisite “Sunday Gin” and “Y&Y Vodka.” More recently, she rolled out a line of handy canned cocktails that don’t exclude vodka mules and gin-and-tonics.

Johnson also runs private tours of her facility for parties of 4 to 10 guests, as well as cocktail classes held in her tasting room. She was recog-

nized by Forbes in 2018 as one of the country’s 30 top entrepreneurs under the age of 30. 1495 G St., 619-955-8755; youandyours.com.

Second Chance Beer Company

Carmel Mountain, North Park and Bankers Hill

Virginia Morrison is co-founder and CEO of the award-winning Second Chance Beer Company, which ranks among San Diego’s esteemed independent craft brewers. The company’s product line has landed in Trader Joe’s, Total Wine, and several other outlets throughout San Diego County.

Headquartered in Carmel Mountain, the business has branched into North Park and Bankers Hill with additional tasting rooms.

Morrison, along with her husband, has dedicated the business to supporting dog rescues. She donates 1 percent of all sales from their Buddy Lager and New Day IPA to non-profit organizations such as The Animal Pad and Second Chance Dog Rescue. Since Second Chance’s launch in 2015, the company has donated more than \$257,000 to the cause. 15378 Avenue of Science, 4045 30th St., and 3095 Fifth Ave., 858-705-6250; secondchancebeer.com.

Sugalab

Ocean Beach



(Courtesy photo)

Rachael Musico at her newly opened Sugalab

After belting out fabulous desserts throughout her career for other companies such as Jamul Casino and Surf Rider Pizza, pastry chef Rachael Musico finally fulfilled a dream by opening Sugalab. Launched in late February, it is her very first bakery and brand, which spotlights everything from specialty pastries and custom cakes to soda floats, warm brownie sundaes and signature rum cake. The shop also has a retail section where customers can purchase baking ingredients, caramel sauce, candies, and more.

Musico opened the business, coincidentally, in the space that housed a former location of Surf Rider Pizza. 2163 Abbott St., 619-228-9255; sugalab.com.

Medina Moroccan-Baja Kitchen

North Park

Owner Alia Jaziri was exposed to north African cooking by her father, who ran a Tunisian-French cafe in San Francisco years ago. She also spent summers in Tunisia, where she’d cook with her grandmother. Though as a native San Diegan and frequent Baja traveler, she reveled in Mexican food.

The result is her popular, casual restaurant that serves a sumptuous fusion of bold and exotically spiced cuisine, which ranges from roasted sweet potato tacos and beer-battered mahi with harissa sauce to house-made lamb

exit full screen



(By Frank Sabatini Jr)

Alia Jaziri

sausage and classic shakshouka with an oozy egg in the middle. 2850 El Cajon Blvd., 619-230-5037, medinakitchen.com.

Sistry Foods

Chula Vista



(Facebook)

Middle sister Diana Zoura of Sistry Foods

Three delicious gluten-free vegan sauces created by three sisters represent the growing success of Sistry Foods, a homegrown wholesaler that has landed on the shelves in retailers such as Sprouts Markets and Harvest Ranch in Encinitas. The sauce line features Chili Chipotle, Ranch, and Jalapeno-Cilantro.

The products were craftily formulated by siblings Diane Zoura, Darlene Zoura, and Daphne Khairo a few years ago from a home kitchen

because of various food allergies experienced by different family members. The sauces, which can also be purchased via the website, contain "clean and healthy ingredients" such as avocado oil, chili peppers and herbs. sistryfoods.com.

The Duck Dive and WanderBars

Pacific Beach

This surfing-themed sports bar and family-friendly dining spot has become synonymous with American fare, cold margaritas, trivia nights and drag brunches, thanks to hospitality maven Rebekah Winn.

The entrepreneur co-owns Duck Dive with her husband, Tom, while playing a crucial role in



(Google Images)

A destination establishment in Pacific Beach

menu development, vendor relations and event planning. In doing so, she utilized her business savvy by starting WanderBars, a party-design and catering company that launched with a mobile cocktail bar converted from a 1969 double horse trailer. 4650 Mission Blvd., 858-273-3825; theduckdive.com and westcoastwanderbars.com.

Urban Kitchen Group



Urban Kitchen Group

San Diego-based restaurateur Tracy Borkum

Kensington/Bankers Hill/Del Mar/Balboa Park
Ever since she opened the former cutting-edge Chive restaurant in the Gaslamp Quarter two decades ago, Tracy Borkum went on to create a series of notable "Cucina" restaurants, which today fall under her Urban Kitchen Group enterprise. Locally, those kitchens include such hot spots as Cucina Sorella in Kensington, Cucina Urbana in Mission Hills, and Cucina Enoteca in Del Mar—all of which offer playful and innovative spins on Italian cuisine.

More recently, Borkum teamed up with the Mingei Museum in Balboa Park to open the stylish Artifact restaurant and the more casual Craft

Cafe. Those were followed by the Jewish-inspired Gold Finch in Torrey Pines and The Kitchen in the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego in La Jolla. She also operates the Urban Kitchen Food Pavilion at The Rady Shell at Jacobs Park in Downtown San Diego. urbankitchengroup.com.

Cafe 222

Marina District Downtown



(Courtesy photo)

Terry Gavre promoting her downtown cafe

In what was perhaps one of San Diego's most effective and eye-catching image for branding a restaurant, Terry Gavre's self-styled photograph of herself donning a waffle on her head has become synonymous with her hip breakfast-lunch joint, Cafe 222.

The talented entrepreneur also owned other restaurants within San Diego County, including the former Bankers Hill Bar + Restaurant. But it is her longstanding cafe that continues garnering praise from local and national media for its enticing approach to hearty meals such as "green eggs and Spam," pork patty Benedict, peanut butter and banana-stuffed French toast, and of course, her famous pumpkin waffles. 222 Island Ave., 619-236-9902; cafe222.com.

Soi 30th and Soi OB

North Park and Ocean Beach

Hailing from Thailand's northeastern Isaan Province is restaurateur Khwanta Osanai, who gives us a taste of foods common to the streets of her native homeland.

Osanai opened the industrial-chic Soi 30th nearly six years ago after working at other local Thai restaurants such as Plumeria and Sab-E-Lee. Her bill of fare includes some rare finds such as Thai beef jerky, fried pork belly with creamy mint sauce, Isaan-style sausage made with pork and glass noodles.

Based on her success in North Park, she more recently launched Soi OB in Ocean Beach, where customers will find a similar menu and colorful pop art to create a welcoming vibe. 3442 30th St., 619-892-7300; soi30th.com, and 1916 Cable St., 619-230-5885; soiob.com.

POWAY SOROPTIMIST CLUB'S HATS AND HEELS FUNDRAISER SET FOR APRIL 16

Summer Stephan, SD District Attorney, Headlines the Annual Event

Poway Soroptimist Club, along with the San Diego North County Club, are hosting their annual Hats and Heels fundraiser April 16 at the Park Hyatt Aviara.

Poway Soroptimist Club is part of a worldwide federation with a goal to empower women and girls through education;

Funds raised at this event allow the organization to continue these programs.

This year's speaker will again be Summer Stephan SD District Attorney, and Shout House will be providing the entertainment.

Several key Soroptimist programs are:

1. Transitional Housing program which moves survivors of domestic violence from dependency and abuse to a safe, self-sustaining life by providing housing, financial aid and mentoring. The clubs have helped 82 women and 197 children of domestic violence reclaim their lives in a positive, supportive environment since 1997. Currently subsidizing 5 apartments for the women and their children.

2. Soroptimists Together Against Trafficking! is a coalition of local Soroptimist clubs working with law enforcement, victims service agencies, and other community groups to combat human sex trafficking in San Diego County since 2011.

3. Last year the Live Your Dream Awards provided over \$28,500 in grants to 14 women who provide the primary source of financial support for their families by giving them the resources they need to improve their education, skills, and employment prospects.

4. A seven-module curriculum presented to at-risk young girls, gives them the tools they need to achieve their education and career goals. This course teaches and promotes self-awareness, self-esteem, goal setting, and career planning. For more information and to register for the event go to:

sihatsandheels.org