

Meet Katherine Newell Smith – if you haven't already!

Women in the food world may have many traits: outgoing, energetic, super-busy, very talented, ultra-organized. But one local culinary expert can claim them all... and more! Her name: Katherine Newell Smith.

Indeed, she seems to know nearly everyone in the metro-area food scene...and beyond! After all, she is a long-time food publicist with an extensive local and national network throughout the culinary world — including writers, editors, chefs, farmers, policymakers — with an enviable ability to connect its movers and shakers.

Hooked to cook

How did this dynamo get started in the culinary world? “At age 10, as part of a Girl Scout cooking badge, I prepared a meal of steak, creamed spinach, baked potatoes, and chocolate pudding for my family and guests,” she said. “I got such rave reviews, I was hooked to cook.”

In college, where she majored in biology and chemistry, Smith took an experimental cooking class in the home economics department and let her science professors critique her dishes. “During that time, I also discovered *Gourmet* magazine,” she said. “That became my real teacher. I made the centerfold menu each month for years. That taught me so much about technique,” she said. “Cooking became such a gratifying and creative outlet.”

Science vs hospitality – no contest!

She worked her way through college at a local resort and found she preferred the hospitality business to a career in a lab. She acknowledges, however, that the detailed, research-oriented science training and her love of writing helped shape her future as a food-



Chefs Joachim Splichal, Vito Gnazzo, and Michel Richard join Katherine Newell Smith to discuss "Get Well Gourmet," *Today Show*, 1988

centric publicist.

For the next several years, Smith worked in the hotel business in California, Florida, Atlanta, and Manhattan. She left to start her own events and PR business in NYC — KNS Promotion, Inc. After she met and married her husband, Alan Miller, and the couple moved to Los Angeles, her career took a sharp turn into the food world.

Gourmet food for patients

“I became the director of communications for Hollywood Presbyterian Medical Center,” she said, “On the first day, I toured a new wing that had a state-of-the-art kitchen. I told the dietary director that we were going to bring in chefs to create gourmet menus for patients. She was very skeptical until Michel Richard, Joachim Splichal, and Vito Gnazzo agreed to help. “That was my first lesson on how generous people in the culinary world are,” she said. “The group created a gorgeous menu. We named the program Get Well

Gourmet. Patients loved it, and it got national attention.”

A year later, the couple moved back to Washington, D.C. Working as a freelance food writer, Smith had the idea for a story called “Home on the Range,” where she would interview prominent chefs about what they cooked at home. She contacted Jean-Louis Palladin, whose restaurant, Jean-Louis at the Watergate, rocked the local food world. He readily agreed but later called to suggest, instead, that she cover a charity dinner where he was cooking with Roberto Donna at the home of Ann Brody. Smith showed up early and hit it off with Brody, who was senior V.P. at Sutton Place Gourmet (now Balducci's). Two weeks later, Smith was made director of communications at the specialty food chain. “Ann has been an amazing influence.” says Smith.

Promoting passion!

During her stint there, she helped put Sutton Place on the national map, appeared regularly with



Smith with Julia Child, 1993

cooking segments on WJLA, WBAL, and FOX 5, and had a radio show, *Kate's Kitchen*, where she even interviewed Julia Child. “It was such fun,” she said. “I got to promote foods raised or made by people with great passion. It's what I still do...I promote passion.”

After she left Sutton Place, she restarted KNS Promotion, representing Michel Richard when he moved to D.C., DC Central Kitchen, Vanns Spices, Chipotle, Choolaah Indian BBQ, and others. From corporate jobs to starting her own food PR firm to represent chefs, food products, restaurants, and nonprofits, Smith's life revolves around hospitality — and food. She has also been very active with Les Dames d'Escoffier, where she has served as international president as well as a four-term D.C. chapter president, and where she has developed some of her closest friendships. After all, D.C. is really a foodie world...and Katherine Newell Smith is one of its grande dames!