



An Entrepreneur for All Seasons
1310 Kitchen & Bar by Jenn Crovato

As a resourceful youngster marketing homemade pepperoni rolls in the teachers' lounge at her suburban Maryland junior high school and delivering her own pizzas on weekends – via skateboard – **Jenn Crovato** was displaying characteristics that would stand her in good stead through a rich and varied culinary career. Talented, hard-working, and admirably balanced, she is now proprietor of **1310 Kitchen & Bar**, anchoring the Georgetown Inn on a fashionable avenue of the nation's capital. During the pandemic, she developed **Jenn's Homemade**, a line of frozen savory dishes that kept selling out – and kept her restaurant afloat.

A love of food is in Crovato's Italian blood. Her grandfather was a professional baker outside Boston; her mother ran a small catering company out of her home kitchen. The family never ate out, but their fridge was always stocked with sophisticated foods like artichokes and sweet-potato ravioli that intrigued and delighted her friends. Crovato worked as a host at a local restaurant in high school and was encouraged by her mother to apply to the Culinary Institute of America; a female boss's pronouncement that she would never make it in a professional kitchen spurred her to try. Suddenly, for the first time ever, she was excelling at school. And on the first day of her CIA externship, at *I Matti* in Washington, she found a steadfast mentor in Chef Roberto Donna. The renowned Italian chef and restaurateur took her under his wing and provided support and connections – including during her year of stages in Italy, when she worked in kitchens from grand resort hotels to humble country tavernas. In the northern regions, at the *Hotel Splendido*, for instance, she was not allowed on the line and only permitted to *tourne* potatoes and chop parsley; in the south, she was delighted by the more homey and intimate establishments where her knife skills were appreciated, the proprietors' families all pitched in, and fishermen delivered fresh catch every morning.

Returning to the DC area, she continued to work for Roberto Donna at *Galileo* before setting out on her own, pursuing ventures that allowed the flexibility she needed as a single mother of two. As a personal chef, contractor, and the lead on-site chef for *Susan Gage Caterers*, she gained years of experience and expertise in client relations, special events, organization, menu planning, and staff management, as well as making valuable client contacts. In 2006-2011, she was full-time personal chef for Joe Robert, Jr., a Washington businessman and philanthropist who entertained constantly – and re-built his home kitchen to Crovato's specifications. In 2013, she was ahead of the times in preparations emphasizing the benefits of Mediterranean-style sensibilities in cooking and published *Olive Oil, Sea Salt & Pepper / Healing with Fresh Foods*, a cookbook that espouses simple, high-quality ingredients and basic cooking techniques. Over the next few years, Crovato served as a culinary consultant to the America Enterprise Institute and Early Mountain Vineyards. She devotes significant time and effort to charitable entities and board affiliations.

In September 2019, Crovato was surprised to be offered the proprietorship of the restaurant attached to the Georgetown Inn, which she'd been consulting for on a temporary basis. Before she knew it, the 175-seat establishment would become her domain, her very first restaurant all on her own. Offering breakfast, lunch, dinner, weekend brunch and bar service, she put her own distinctive stamp on it, from the classic but youthful, inviting interior to a menu that follows her philosophy in cooking. Black-and-white photographs of female rock stars punctuate the décor, as a tribute to those who have had to work harder to succeed in male-dominated fields: Crovato understands that and has also named her entire cocktail list after hits by legends from Stevie Nicks to Nina Simone. "I love the strength of these bad-ass women," she says. "I want to celebrate them every way I can as I do my part in the continuum of their break-through achievements." Hand-written quotations grace the windows, changing every so often and luring passersby with an uplifting attitude. She offers many vegetarian and vegan options, and much of the menu is gluten-free. Her best-selling calamari is grilled, not fried, and her Peruvian chicken dish, another popular favorite, replaces a traditionally fat-laden sauce with an avocado-yogurt blend. She proudly supports her fellow local businesses, featuring granola from Baked & Wired, right around the corner, in her popular Yogurt Granola Bowl, and Call Your Mother Bagels. The chef is generous with her credit: "Every single element on a plate has to be of superb quality, but I don't have to be producing each one. I love sourcing amazing products and working with local culinary artisans who are doing such interesting work. They are specialists, and I have no need to re-invent the wheel," she explains.

The new restaurant was doing very well and looking forward to an even stronger 2020 when everything suddenly went to a screeching halt. A fundraiser Crovato developed during the pandemic to benefit the Georgetown Main Street organization sold 500 frozen Chicken Pot Pies in seven days, and she realized she was on to something. "I was thinking 'Yikes!'" she laughs, "but customers were asking, 'Are you going to keep selling these?!'" The demand remained high, and she added a few more dishes to her Jenn's Homemade line as people stayed home and spent more and more time in their own kitchens but were not necessarily inclined to cook every night. She plans to keep the frozen entrées as part of the business plan when the calls keeping coming in for more orders. The entrepreneurial spirit can be traced back to that girl on the skateboard, having fun, working hard, and making it work.

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