



No reservations

Cooking for celebs in Hollywood has given Chef Samantha Garelick a novel idea: Make kosher cuisine just as classy as the food at the best non-kosher restaurants.

By Chanie Cohen Kirschner

If you were writing a profile on Samantha Garelick (which as it turns out, I am), you'd have a few different ways to introduce her. You could talk about how she recently married and moved out to L.A. with her Hollywood screenwriter husband. You could write about her inspiring journey to becoming a religious Jew, or maybe even write about how she's cooked food for famous Hollywood celebs. If you were me, you'd

choose to open the profile with everything I just wrote and then end the first paragraph by mentioning the project that has brought her to the food section of AJL magazine — her quest to take everything she's learned as a professional chef and make kosher cooking healthy — and classy.

Garelick's love for cooking started as a child in her mother's kitchen, continued through high school, and made

her a favorite among her study group at Cornell. But it wasn't until the petite brunette from New York quit her job at a Fortune 500 company to enroll in culinary school, that a pastime became a passion. "They put us through the ringer," Garelick recalls. "But I learned so much and it was so much fun."

A mere year later, she found herself far away from her air-conditioned office in New York City, slaving away as a sauce chef in the basement of a swanky Mexican restaurant in downtown Chicago. The only English speaker in the hot, crowded kitchen, she lugged 50-pound vats of chili sauce around. "Every morning, I would come in at seven and have to transfer all the sauces in the walk-in refrigerator from the big containers to the small containers," Garelick laughs. "My entire apron was covered in sauce by 7:15 a.m., the true sign of a rookie."

But she's a rookie no more. Garelick has worked for world-renowned chefs in both Chicago and New York. Much like a writer or an artist, she mixes ingredients to create her own unique recipes, an average of 20 a season. And in a kosher market where most cookbooks feature salt and margarine-laden recipes, Garelick's recipes are deliciously health-conscious. This isn't your bubbe's potato kugel.

At the same time that Garelick followed her own creative path, she followed her future husband, *The Breakup* screenwriter Jeremy Garelick, on a different path, to learn more about her Judaism. Together, they made the decision to keep a kosher and Sabbath-observant home. Most people who make this decision reluctantly exchange fine dining for frozen bourekas.

But Chef Sam didn't settle for that. Especially since playing with recipes was her specialty. "Even in school, I would ask permission to make a recipe a certain way," Garelick remembers. "And

This new wine from the suburbs of Jerusalem is a premium dark red blend of (3 parts) Cabernet Sauvignon and (1 part) Merlot. The flavor of cherries and currants abound underscored with moderate tannins and an appealing hint of freshly turned earth. It's a welcome newcomer — perfect for your High Holiday meal — with a long berry-rich finish. And, if you don't trust us, consider this: It was the gold medal winner at Terravino.

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I realized that I could teach people how to cook interesting healthy foods and make them kosher.”

And teach she does. A Jewish Martha Stewart (without the prison record) Garelick is spreading her message to the masses. She is the contributing chef for thekosherhostess.com, an online community for Jewish cooks, and is a creative consultant for Wild Pomegranate, a kosher specialty gifts company with a hip, unique flavor.

Like all successful preachers, Garelick’s excitement is infectious. Her private cooking classes are growing in popularity; she is often asked to serve as the entertainment at bachelorette parties and wedding showers. People even buy her for a one-hour cooking class as a gift for friends and family.

Recalling kosher grocery marts of yore whose shelves were dusty and whose aisles smelled of grease, Garelick explains how the marketplace is rapidly changing. She is ever-optimistic about the changing face of kosher and the improvements it will bring. “The kosher world was always just a couple steps behind, but the number of people keeping kosher is growing, and there’s finally nice restaurants to go to, and nice wine to drink.” She pauses. “It doesn’t suck to be kosher anymore.”

“Things are only going to get better for the kosher market,” Garelick assures me with confidence at the end of our conversation. And with Garelick as a driving force, that’s almost a certainty. ■



CHEF SAM'S ROASTED CORN SALAD

I power up my Mac laptop and set it on my kitchen counter, anxiously awaiting Chef Sam’s expert guidance. She had created a mini instructional cooking video for me to try out one of her recipes. My own private cooking show, I thought, this is going to be great.

I had asked her for an easy yet impressive recipe because my in-laws were coming this weekend. I needed to show them that their new daughter-in-law was the perfect wife (they didn’t need to know that most nights of the week we ordered takeout). I started the video she had created for me, and listened carefully, poised to start working as she told me to shave the roasted corn off the cob and into a bowl.

Wait a minute, the corn had to be roasted first? I quickly shut the video off, and spend the next half hour expeditiously roasting all the corn I had on my George Foreman grill.

I restart the video and carefully follow Sam’s direction as she guides me through the rest of the recipe. It is actually pretty simple, and as I pour the salad from the mixing bowl into a plastic container, I think myself pretty darn talented. I should cook more often.

The phone rings. It’s my husband at the Chinese place down the block. Do I want the usual, he asks? Yes, and don’t forget the egg roll. The roasted corn salad will only go so far. ■ C.C.K.

▶ See if you can make the roasted corn salad also. Watch Chef Sam’s instructional video made exclusively for AJL on our website.

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