

SUCCESS STORY **Portland District Office**

Lisa Schroeder's Place Is In Her Kitchen



In her restaurant, Mother's Bistro & Bar, Lisa Schroeder is earnest, self-assured, educated and articulate. Despite her current demeanor, life was not always kind to Schroeder; it took nearly a decade for her real passion to evolve - cooking mom's favorite meals for all to enjoy.

Life in New York during 1993 was hard for Schroeder and her daughter. Her second marriage ended, she had no job and she broke her arm. Old proverbs say that bad luck comes in threes. Fortunately, Schroeder's bad luck was auspicious. "My mother had a restaurant before I was born. She taught me to know good food," said Schroeder. However, she noted that there was no place in New York to get mother's home cooking. She searched deep into her soul to find the life she really wanted. Schroeder's dream was to own a restaurant that served mama's cooking. With \$100 in her pocket, she enrolled in the Culinary Institute of America (CIA) at Hyde Park.

"The CIA provided me with the best 21 months of my life," said Schroeder. She was happy because she was following her heart. Consequently, her dedication to good food and hard work, along with some scholarships, put her on the road to success. Later, Schroeder worked for some top notch Manhattan restaurants such as Lespinasse and Le Cirque. She also apprenticed in France with well-known chefs, where she learned the art of regional cooking. After returning to New York, she eventually met Rob Sample, a native of Oregon and together they move to Portland in August 1997. Schroeder made a name for herself at Besaw's Cafe, a neighborhood establishment, before she and Rob made the leap into owning a restaurant.

With the help of the Foundation for Women Owned Businesses (FWOB) and a small fee, Schroeder would soon find a kitchen that she could call home. The FWOB, a SBA designated technical assistance organization, helped Schroeder to prepare a business plan and complete a pre-qualification loan application. They reviewed Schroeder's credit information, performed a loan analysis and submitted the application to the SBA Portland District Office Finance Division.

SBA's Finance Division reviewed the application to determine whether it met the requirements for a guaranteed loan and issued a commitment letter. With FWOB's assistance, Schroeder "shopped" the pre-qualified loan application to lenders interested in making SBA-guaranteed loans. Kathy Betteridge, V.P. and Small Business Specialist at Key Bank, believed in Schroeder's dream and helped her to find a place in Mother's Kitchen.

Cooking is not a glamorous profession; there is stress and pressure. Nevertheless, cooking is a romantic lifestyle for Schroeder. She says, "I create an atmosphere that is comfortable and stylish, where people enjoy simple and satisfying food from a specific place and tradition." Schroeder creates all her dishes from scratch and uses the finest ingredients for each recipe. Mother's Bistro showcases a variety of mother's recipes. "I want to honor these women and their culinary contributions. Nothing is more sacred than the nurturing of our families, and I love the idea that I can share what these women did for their families by cooking their specialties and by putting their pictures on my menu each month."

In 2002, Mother's Bistro & Bar was recognized by Food & Wine Magazine as one of America's Top Restaurant Bargains. With lines literally out the door on weekends, it came as no surprise in 2004 when Mother's Bistro & Bar was voted Best Brunch by Portland Monthly Magazine, Willamette Week, Citysearch and AOL.

In August 2004, Lisa Schroeder opened Mama Mia Trattoria, inviting Portlanders to experience the classic Italian dishes she grew up on in Philadelphia's Little Italy. Remaining true to her philosophy, she serves what she describes as "southern Italian soul food" – the cuisine which resulted when southern Italian immigrants adapted the food of their motherland to the available ingredients in their new homeland.

According to Schroeder, "Your calling comes from the love of following your passion. I am passionate about cooking, and I love to bring enjoyment to people." Schroeder has found her place in the kitchen of Mother's Bistro & Bar and Mama Mia Trattoria.

Mother's Bistro & Bar and Mama Mia Trattoria

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