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NEWTON IN THE KITCHEN

By [Wendy Schapiro](#) [Email the author](#) January 21, 2011

[Business](#)

Souper Successful in Business and Love

Marjorie Druker, owner and chef at the New England Soup Factory, talks about how she fell in love with her husband and food.

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About this column: Local resident and foodie Wendy Schapiro chats with Newton chefs and restaurateur about their restaurant, their cooking, their passions and best of all, what makes them hungry.



While the soup at [New England Soup Factory](#) warms the belly, the love story that was the genesis of the local eatery does a lot to warm the heart, too.

In 1983, when 19-year-old Marjorie Druker was a culinary student at Johnson and Wales, she was awarded a prestigious internship in the kitchens of the South Seas Resort on Captiva Island in Florida.

On her very first day at the South Seas, she met Paul Brophy, and it was love at first sight. The two of them moved in together shortly thereafter, only being separated for a little while when Marjorie came back to Rhode Island to complete her degree.

They were married in 1989, had daughter Emily (who is a Johnson and Wales student now) in 1992 and opened the first New England Soup Factory in Brookline in 1995.

"One day (in 1994), my husband came home from work (while) we were eating dinner and he said, 'Guess what? I bought you a restaurant,'" Druker recalled.

But Druker, a Newton native, has a love affair with food that goes back even further than the relationship with her husband.

When she was a senior at [Newton North High School](#), Druker's parents told her she needed to get a job to help pay for college. She went to work for Florence Sender who owned Nibbles, one of the first gourmet take-out shops in the area (located in the space now occupied by [Pageo](#)). The manager of the shop was Arthur Cores, who would go on to open the Boston Chicken (and then Boston Market) stores and eventually, in 1985, hire Druker after she graduated from Johnson and Wales.

She worked for Cores for five years, and from 1989 until 1995 Druker was one of the first private chefs in the Metro West area.

Druker and Brophy opened the first New England Soup Factory in its current Brookline Place location in 1995. The Newton shop, located on Needham Street, followed with an opening on Druker's 35th birthday in 1998. The couple is still following their original dream of having food establishments where "he runs the front of the house and I run the back of the house, do all of the cooking and menu planning."

The New England Soup Factory's menu has several constants, and comfort food favorites include the matzo ball soup, the beef stew and the chicken pot pie.

"Students who come to the area, who go to [BC](#) and Northeastern and BU, are away from their mom's cooking for the first time," says Druker. "They want something that reminds them of home."

But Druker also explores her own creativity in the specials that change every day, and her loyal guests (she prefers to think of her customers as friends and guests rather than just clients) literally eat it up.

"The people from Newton and Brookline are very diverse and incredibly open-minded," Druker enthuses. "I can get as crazy or as wild as I want; it's my goal every day to exceed their expectations. And they're so into it!"

Druker is the co-author of *The New England Soup Factory Cookbook*. Videos of her teaching and cooking can be found at How2Heroes.com

Here's a recipe for one of Marjorie's famous homestyle stews -- enjoy!

Veal and Portobello Mushroom Stew

This is my favorite stew recipe of all time. I love veal stew because I love the sweet and mellow flavor of tender milk fed veal. This is a special stew recipe that does break the bank but worth every bite. I make this stew at home on the weekends and then live off of it for a few days during the week. It can be dressed up or dressed down according to your mood. I have served this stew to important company on my best dishes and I have served it to my family in pajamas and slippers in the dead of winter. Either way it tastes fabulous and you will find it irresistible.

- 4 Tablespoons of olive oil
- 2 pounds of veal stew beef
- 2 cups of seasoned flour (season with salt and pepper)
- 1 large fennel bulb diced into bite-sized pieces
- 3 cloves of freshly minced garlic
- 1 pound of Italian cippolini onions peeled
- 5 large Portobello mushroom caps diced into bite sized pieces
- 3 cups of merlot wine
- 3 cups of veal or chicken stock
- 2 cups of stewed canned tomatoes
- 1 cup of ground tomatoes
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano
- 2 teaspoons dried basil
- 1-teaspoon fennel seeds
- 1 Tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Dredge the veal pieces in the seasoned flour and shake off the excess. Heat a large Dutch oven or braising pan and add the olive oil. Add the veal pieces and cook until the outside of the veal looks crispy brown. You will have to do this in two batches as to not over crowd the meat. Remove the browned veal and place on a plate and set aside. In the same pan add the fennel, garlic and cippolini onions. Sauté for 5 minutes stirring frequently. Add the mushrooms and the veal and sauté an additional 2 minutes. Add the wine, stock, tomatoes and herbs. Stir well and cover and place in a pre-heated 325-degree oven and cook for 3 hours or until the veal is soft and tender. Remove from oven and add the vinegar and season with salt and freshly ground black pepper.

Note: I also like to serve this stew over buttered papardelle pasta and I top it with freshly grated Parmesan cheese and fresh torn basil leaves.

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