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# At Love Lane Kitchen, Carolyn Iannone is a familiar smiling face

by [BRIDGET SHIRVELL](#) on MARCH 2nd, 2019

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CAROLYN IANNONE OUTSIDE HER POPULAR MATTITUCK RESTAURANT. (CREDIT: DAVID BENTHAL)

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As much as Love Lane Kitchen is a dining destination, it’s also a feeling – one exquisitely cultivated by owner Carolyn Iannone. But she doesn’t think she deserves the credit.

“It has a mind of its own. It’s a culmination of the ingredients, our service, our crew, our purveyors and there’s just this energy when you bring it all together. I can’t take credit for it. It just exists. All I can do is take a step back and be really proud,” she said.

Simply put, Love Lane Kitchen wouldn’t be what it is today without Iannone. For going on 10 years, she’s been a fixture at the North Fork café, first as a manager and now as owner. On any given day, she walks the equivalent of seven miles in the dining room, keeping a hand in every aspect of the restaurant, from what’s easy to see – greeting customers, curating the wine list – to what’s not – helping to source local ingredients for the kitchen, creating partnerships with other Love Lane businesses and more. As she moves gracefully about her daily tasks, it seems like owning Love Lane Kitchen is a role made for Iannone, and yet she says it’s one she never imagined herself in.



(CREDIT: DAVID BENTHAL)



Growing up in East Moriches, food was a way of life for Iannone's Italian family.

"It was more about the gathering aspect of it than the food itself, the getting together and sharing of a meal," she recalled. "My mom is one of eight [siblings], all girls, and there were always these beautiful, smart women behind the meals we shared at the holidays."

No one in the family worked in the food and beverage industry. Iannone herself went to SUNY/Albany to study journalism, thinking at the time she might end up with a career writing about food.

"My main goal when I was a student was to figure out a way to eat, drink, travel, write and get paid for it," she said.

After school, Iannone got her sommelier certificate, dragged her mom and sister to Southeast Asia and then her best friend to Europe, where they ate and drank their way through nine cities in 21 days.

"Throughout it all, I was collecting these moments that carried with me, that sense of community around the sharing of a meal," she said. "That food was a common ground no matter your religion or language or where in the world you went."

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Despite her wanderlust, Long Island had a hold on Iannone, one the North Fork continues to have to this day.

"There are times my husband and I are out paddling and we stop, look around and say we can't believe this is our home, can't believe we live and work here," she said.

In 2009, Iannone, who had waited tables in the past, began managing Love Lane Kitchen. She said she found she loved leading a team and creating a culture.

In 2012, the same year she got married, she jumped at an opportunity to buy the restaurant from its previous owner.

“It was a pretty intense year. I started calling 2012, the year of being bold, or being committed,” she said. “I

Seven years later, she realizes that the more things have changed at Love Lane Kitchen and on the North Fork, the more things have stayed the same.

“I think it’s important to highlight things that have stayed the same. It’s the owner-operated businesses that make Love Lane so special,” said Iannone, who helped launch Love Lane’s First Fridays, which have evolved into a sort of destination block party. “In every store there is an owner with a team with its sleeves rolled up, passionate about what they are doing,” she said.



(CREDIT: DAVID BENTHAL)



On the rare occasion she’s not walking seven miles in the dining room, Iannone loves being on the water. Every chance they get, she and her husband will hop on their 21-foot sailboat with a cooler of goodies and a bottle of rosé and head out to watch the sunset. She also enjoys popping in to eat at other North Fork restaurants, including North Fork Table and Inn and Little Creek Oyster Farm & Market, and decompressing with yoga.

Then it's back to the café and cultivating that unique Love Lane Kitchen feeling, where to step inside is to walk



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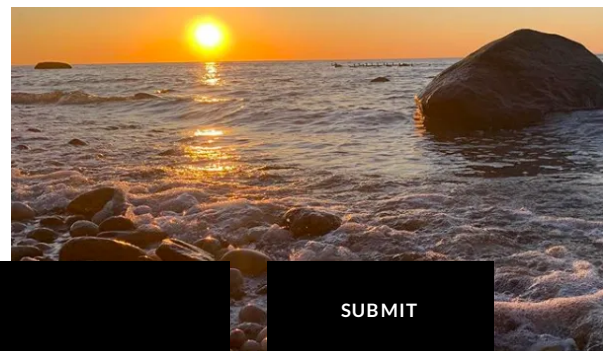


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