

Seasoned with Strength: Chef Betty Redefines Retirement

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Taste one of Chef Betty's dishes, and you can easily understand why she seems immune to the siren song of Retirement. The culinary world is a demanding mistress, but there's an undeniable allure to its intoxicating blend of creativity and chaotic flavors.



2024 Equality Food & Wine Festival

When I decided to turn my hobby into a career, it changed my life in ways I never imagined. The hard work was exhilarating, and the hours flew by. I faced challenges, endured long hours, and sacrificed personal time, but the passion and creativity that fueled me kept me going. I never really gave retirement much thought. The kitchen was my sanctuary, my playground, my obsession. The adrenaline rush of a busy night and the satisfaction of a happy customer were addictive. But there were moments, usually around 5 a.m., when I'd question my life choices. The endless staffing issues, demanding hours, and constant stress could be a real buzzkill.

When I moved to the desert, I gave myself a break—a chance to pull back a little. A school cafeteria? Hardly glamorous, but it was a chance to recharge. There were no late nights, no screaming orders, just kids with questionable taste buds. I saw it as an opportunity to introduce them to the magic of real food, like transforming fresh tomatoes into their beloved ketchup. It was culinary rehab but with less therapy and more chicken nuggets.

But the quiet life didn't last. The itch to create, experiment, and push boundaries started to gnaw at me. Retirement? It was more like a culinary midlife crisis. I wanted to be back in the game but on my terms. That's when I discovered the home kitchen law. It was like winning the culinary lottery.

Suddenly, I was running a one-woman restaurant out of my own home. My background in food safety was a perfect fit, making the transition smoother. The work was insane, but the freedom was intoxicating. Contactless delivery? Genius. My friends thought I'd lost my mind. "I thought you were retiring," they'd say. "Me too!" I'd laugh in reply, but secretly, I was living the dream—or at least my version of it.



Chef Betty in her home kitchen

Retirement for a passionate chef is more of an evolution than an exit. After five years of this "retirement," I've discovered a delicate balance between relaxation and the relentless pull of the culinary world. It's a constant reimagining of what retirement truly means. I once envisioned a life of culinary exploration, traveling the globe, and hosting intimate gatherings without the pressure of a professional kitchen. While those dreams haven't vanished entirely, the reality has been a delightful blend of personal fulfillment and unexpected culinary adventures.

Retirement is a journey of adaptation and rediscovery for those who love their craft. Chefs, in particular, find new ways to channel their passion, whether through teaching, writing, or simply savoring the art of cooking in a more personal setting. While the dream of retirement might differ from the reality, it's a path filled with unexpected rewards and creative opportunities. Let's face it, retirement is for people who don't know how to make a good sauce. For those of us who can't imagine life without the thrill of doing what we love, rest assured, we're in good company.



Betty is in her kitchen, wearing her favorite red jumper and matching shoes.

Chef Betty Berrysmith is a proud member of the Coachella Valley Sistahs Network (CVSN). She is a seasoned culinary artist with a passion for sharing her love of food. With over 30 years of experience, she has mastered the art of blending Southern traditions with California flavors, creating her signature CaliSoul cuisine. At B's Table, Chef Betty serves up dishes bursting with fresh, local ingredients. So, while retirement might be on the horizon for some, rest assured, Chef Betty's kitchen will remain open – because let's face it, who wants to retire from good food? She lives in La Quinta with her wife, Teri. Visit bstablecalisoul.com for more information.