Letter from the *Editor*

Kate Chadwick introduces the issue

Among the many blessings I count in my life, one pushes its way to the forefront on a regular basis: people love to feed me. From the time I was a scrawny kid growing up in an Italian neighborhood in West Philly—as a member of one of only three Irish families in a three-block radius—it's been a thing. Mrs. Garzarella on 63rd Street, the mother of my then best friend, started breaking out the provisions every time I crossed their threshold. And it wasn't "Here's a bowl of chips for you girls." It was homemade pasta with homemade sauce via the tomatoes her husband grew in their postage stamp-sized garden. She'd pull giant hunks of cheeses, a big bowl of salad, salami and prosciutto, and leftover meatballs the size of tennis balls out of their seeming clown car of a refrigerator. Her grasp of English was shaky, her husband's nearly nonexistent, but they said two things constantly: "Sit down. Eat something."

As I write this, some 40+ years later, I'm at home with the coffee brewing, awaiting a friend who will arrive bearing breakfast sandwiches. I have all the fixins to make my own, and in fact they're one of my few culinary specialties, but hell yes: you can feed me.

A man once opened my refrigerator and announced, "This looks like it was stocked by a 10-year-old." Another once told me I had the eating habits of a 15-year-old boy. Not wrong, entirely, either of them. A friend visiting my home for the first time responded "whatever you're having" when I asked him if he'd like something to eat. He was served a PB&J and a glass of chocolate milk.

Hence my love of dining out—even a couple of decades as a waitress couldn't beat it out of me. Roast me a chicken, grill me a steak, make me an omelet, please and thank you. I love the whole experience of food being prepared and served and enjoyed (and no dishes to do after), whether *a deux*, with a group, or flying solo. And if we're on a date and you know me well enough, you go right ahead and order for me. I make enough decisions in a day. I'm a feminist to the core, but food is a love language that transcends roles.

In this issue we visit Opa for Date Night, where we take a culinary jaunt to Greece. Fair warning: I was instantly hungry after I read this. Are you just heading out for a drink? Take a break from the handcrafted/bespoke cocktail scene for a cold beer at one of the OG neighborhood bars here in the borough. And if you are a grazer, like me, our Say Cheese feature is a must-read, highlighting the red-hot trend of charcuterie boards, laden with those cheeses, meats, and *accoutrements* that I started eating 'round Mrs. Garzarella's table at the age of eight. Maybe the next time my friend comes over I'll upgrade him from PB&J to meat, cheese & fruit.

I hope you savor this issue of Taste, and we thank you for reading it. **—kate@tastewestchester.com**

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-James Beard

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Published By...
***THE WC PRESS* &**
MATHERS PRODUCTIONS, LLC
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TASTE West Chester is the food-only spinoff of *The WC Press*.
It's mailed to 3,000+ local readers and dropped off to more than 200 locations in and around the borough. For a free subscription, mailed or digital, visit **thewcpress.com/subscribe**

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