

Chef and mom barely has time to catch her breath

Cali Bergold

ChefCali Inc.

Energetic and driven, 38-year-old Cali Bergold recently gave birth to her fourth child, opened a restaurant six months ago in Woodstock and operates her own private chef/catering/cooking class business called ChefCali Inc.

A journalism major, she discovered the restaurant world while writing food reviews for Today's Chicago Woman magazine and was seduced by the energy and fast pace of the kitchen.

She studied at night at the Culinary and Hospitality Institute of Chicago, worked at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange Club, Cab's Wine Bar Bistro in Glen Ellyn and Café V in the National Vietnam Veterans Art

Chef du jour

A visit with area chefs

Museum in Chicago.

This Woodstock resident left the rat race of the restaurant world three years ago when she started ChefCali, only to dive back in with her own restaurant, called Tip Top, this year. Bergold isn't the executive chef, but she works the front of the house every day, helps with catered events and consults with the chef.

You might be surprised to know what this outgoing, ambitious woman would love to do if she only had time.

Tell us about your first cooking job at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange Club: All I was allowed

to do was peel carrots. The traders drink tons of carrot juice. I would come in at three in the morning and peel pounds and pounds and pounds. My hands were orange all the time. I did that about a month and the chef moved me to *garde manger* (salads and cold foods).

What happened next? I was hired as executive chef at Cab's Wine Bar Bistro (in Glen Ellyn). I was pretty young (about 28 or 29), and I could not believe this person was putting so much trust and value in me. I was living in the city, getting up at 6 a.m. and getting home at 2 a.m. I loved it.

What excites you about teaching? It is totally a big ego trip. I'm kind of a closet actress and I love the attention. I have worked at the Chopping Block



CHRISTOPHER HANKINS/DAILY HERALD

Sleep? What's that? Between running a sit-down restaurant, cooking for clients as a personal chef and caring for four children, Cali Bergold doesn't get much of it.

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in Chicago, Whole Foods in Naperville and Williams-Sonoma in Naperville and Geneva.

What do you take most pride in? That I've stayed sane! Actually, right now I'm proud of this restaurant.

What has been toughest? Trying to balance my home and children with business. I have four children — 3-year-old twins, a 2-year-old and a newborn. Sometimes I'll be at work 17 hours and realize I haven't seen my kids in two days. It is difficult. The business is all-consuming.

How do you manage? I have a full-time nanny. I'm very scheduled, hour by hour. On certain days I know I will see them a longer time. Sometimes I bring my kids to the restaurant, and I carve out Sundays as family day.

When do you sleep? If I get 5 hours I'm really happy. I get up at 4 a.m. and I'm out of the restaurant at 10 or 11 (p.m.)

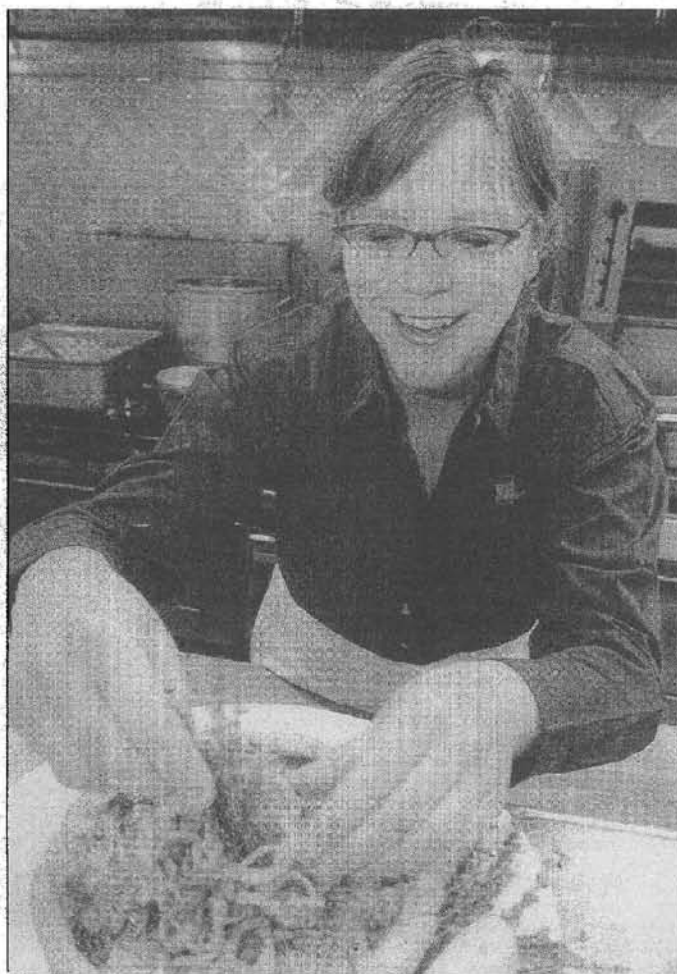
What would people be surprised to know about you? That I'm a total geek. People think I'm very social, bubbly and outgoing. But if I had my druthers I would be locked in a room with a million books. My goal is a book a week.

Your latest read? "Until I Find You" by John Irving. He is one of my favorite writers.

What advice would you give people about dining out? I just want the consumer to give their money locally first. Go to a restaurant where they know the owner, see the owner. You can't get that in a big franchise restaurant.

Have you had any catering challenges? Once I was hired to prepare a dinner for several couples at one of their homes. I walked into the house with the food and realized he had no kitchen! He had failed to tell me he was completely remodeling. I had use of a bar-size refrigerator, a sink and a two-burner butane camp stove.

I just said, "I can do this," and we did. We all got a big kick out of it. Later I asked him why he didn't tell me about the kitchen



Chef: Cali Bergold

Chef Cali Bergold, left, piles onions on Caramelized Onion and Blue Cheese Tart at Tip Top Bistro in Woodstock.

and he said, "I knew if you were good, you were going to be able to handle it."

Any other interesting stories? One of my clients had a beautiful kitchen, all top-quality appliances. But she told me, "You'll be working in the basement." Downstairs she had another huge kitchen that was not as great, but still good stuff. The kitchen upstairs was only for show.

Tell us about this recipe: Caramelized Onion and Blue Cheese Tart. We serve this as a

special at Tip Top, I teach this recipe in my classes and it is a great party favorite.

I chose this recipe not only because it is absolutely delicious but because the tart dough recipe is so versatile. This recipe is the best pie crust recipe I've ever made and it's easy because you make it in a food processor. It can be used for apple pies, chicken pot pie, lemon tart, quiche, whenever you need a crust.

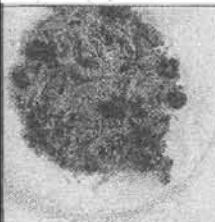
Try this at home, or at Tip Top Bistro, 108 Cass St., Woodstock.

(815) 338-7900; www.tiptop-bistro.com. For information on ChefCali cooking classes, private chef services or catering, call the bistro or visit www.chefcali.com.

• *Chef du Jour*, compiled by Laura Bianchi, appears weekly in Food. To recommend a chef to be profiled, please send the chef's name, restaurant and telephone number to *Chef du Jour*, Daily Herald Food Section, P.O. Box 280, Arlington Heights, IL 60006; or e-mail us at food@dailyherald.com.

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FOOD



Cook of the week
 Busy mom still finds time for entertaining

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