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A DELICIOUS LEGACY: 30 YEARS OF *Aux Délices*

Debra Ponzek turned a simple dream into a Greenwich institution and built a life, family, and community along the way

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Over the years, I've had the privilege of working alongside Debra at food events and witnessing firsthand the grace, generosity, and expertise she brings to everything she does. I always love when our paths cross and I feel fortunate to call her not only an inspiration, but also a friend and respected colleague within the culinary world. It's a true honor to share her story, one that spans three decades of excellence, innovation, and community in Greenwich.

Long before prepared foods were part of the everyday dining landscape, Debra Ponzek had a vision. It was inspired by a gourmet shop she once visited as a child with her father, a cozy storefront

with an array of beautifully presented dishes that captured her imagination. Years later, after an accomplished career as a chef in New York City, that memory would become the seed for Aux Délices, the now-iconic Greenwich food shop and café that helped define how a community eats.

When she and her husband, Greg, discovered a space in Riverside, it just felt right. "It seemed like the perfect fit," she recalls. "And it had plenty of parking, which I quickly learned is gold in the suburbs!" Its proximity to the city also appealed to her. She suspected many of their customers dined in Manhattan and would appreciate the same level of quality and care, but in a more convenient way.

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At the time, take-home meals weren't the norm. Greenwich diners were accustomed to either restaurant experiences or home-cooked dinners. Aux Délices bridged the gap, offering restaurant-quality food that families could enjoy around their own tables. "We loved that our customers appreciated fine dining," she says, "and wanted to give them something beautiful, comforting, and ready to take home."

The opening week remains etched in her memory. The shop gleamed with serveware, glass bowls, imported olive oils, salts, chocolates, and specialty vinegars. Greg welcomed guests at the front, sharing the concept with anyone who walked through the door. "It was such an exciting time," she remembers. "We couldn't wait to see what people thought."

That sense of connection, she says, has never faded. "It still makes me happy when I see friends meeting in the shop, customers introducing new people to their favorite menu items, or our team chatting with regulars. The energy is always so positive."

Expansion came gradually and intentionally. Greg, who had been running a restaurant with his brother in Monroe, eventually joined the business full-time, and became instrumental in its growth. "He always had a keen sense of timing," she says. "We never opened another shop until we knew the first was strong and our team was ready."

The couple's professional partnership mirrors their marriage, full of balance, humor, and respect. "People are always amazed we work together every day," she says. "It works because we bring different strengths. Greg's detail-oriented and financially disciplined; I'm focused on product, creativity, and consistency. He's patient, I'm more of a let's-do-it-now type. It just works."

At home, that dynamic translated into a rhythm that allowed them to raise a family while growing a brand. "One of the benefits of our business was closing at a reasonable hour," she says. "We could still make it to school events or have dinner with our kids. Like most

working parents, we've had to juggle, but living and working in Greenwich made it easier to do both."

Thirty years on, Aux Délices remains a Greenwich favorite, not because it's stayed the same, but because it's evolved with its customers. "If you told me 30 years ago that we'd be selling microwavable meals, I would've said no way," Debra states. "But times change, and part of staying relevant is adapting." Still, she's never compromised on quality. Everything is made from scratch with the finest ingredients, and beloved classics like the orzo salad, kale salad, Brussels sprouts salad, chicken parm, and homestyle chocolate cake; those will never leave the menu and remain untouchable.

For Debra, the true reward of longevity is seeing how deeply Aux Délices has become woven into Greenwich life. "It's incredible to see adults who used to come in as toddlers now shopping with their own kids," she says. "Or when parents show me texts from their children who've moved to the city, asking them to bring back their favorite Aux Délices dishes, that's the best compliment."

She's equally proud of the brand's charitable work, particularly its partnership with Food Rescue, which collects leftovers daily and redistributes them to organizations in need. "Giving back has always been part of who we are," she says. "It's something that brings the entire team a sense of purpose."

And that team, she adds, is the heartbeat of the business. "Our staff is incredibly talented and loyal. They're the reason we've been able to do this for 30 years."

Three decades in, Debra shows no signs of slowing down. "I'm so lucky, I truly love going to work every day," she says. "I don't see myself retiring anytime soon. I just want to stay healthy, travel more, and keep enjoying Greenwich's food scene."

As for what she hopes customers continue to feel when they walk through the doors of Aux Délices? Her answer is simple:

"I hope they feel welcomed, comfortable, happy, and hungry."

"I MET *Debra Ponzek* SIXTEEN YEARS AGO WHEN I OPENED MY RESTAURANT IN GREENWICH AND WAS STRUCK BY HER *talent, business savvy, and the incredible legacy she had built with Aux Délices.* FROM THE BEGINNING, I FELT HONORED TO SHARE THE SAME DINING COMMUNITY *with someone I so deeply admired.*"