



Jill Strauss and her outdoor wood-fired oven, which she uses teaching students at Jillyanna's Woodfired Cooking School. *Courtesy photo*

'It's great fun to put all of my passions together'

Personnel File

JILL STRAUSS

Jillyanna's Woodfired Cooking School

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Jill Strauss, president of Jillyanna's Woodfired Cooking School, thinks she may have found what she wants to be when she grows up: a pizzaiolo. Strauss spent 15 years as a public school gifted and talented teacher, and had a career in print and radio journalism before she decided to follow her "great passion for cooking, entertaining, and fire" to open a cooking school with her partner of 20 years, Valerie Glynn.

The women have always enjoyed entertaining in their home, especially hosting dinner parties.

"Friends were always saying, 'You should do this for more people,' but life gets in the way of our passions sometimes," said Strauss.

When Strauss did decide to follow her dream, it led her to Italy, where she studied with Enzo Coccia, a fourth-generation pizzaiolo. It was a real learning experience for Strauss.

"In Italy, most, if not all pizzaiolis are men. They are greatly respected for the skill and

usually command a better than average salary," she said. "My teacher was used to consulting with women from around the world. He spoke a little English, pretended to speak none, and was a hard taskmaster. I learned a great deal from him and he learned a few things from me, I hope."

At Jillyanna's, Strauss leads hands-on, 3½-hour classes on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, as well as private sessions, in the art of rustic pizza making. Students spend time learning to stretch dough, prepare herbs and even poke a live fire in the wood-fired oven where the pizzas are cooked.

Students also spend time in an indoor teaching kitchen equipped with gas and electric ovens. The goal is to help students develop the skill to create Italian-inspired food their own home. Strauss has been amazed at the reaction to Jillyanna's, which opened for business last year.

"We've had incredible response and continue to get a lot of inquiries. Our customers tell us they had no idea it would be this much fun," said Strauss. It's a very happy feeling when you're harnessing all your talents and people love you for it."

Q What were your most important needs in getting started?

A Well, I had the advantage of being older, not going into this as a kid. I had done a lot of things in my life. I thought, "Why

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'It's about creating the culture where people want to work'

Personnel File

BETH L. STURTEVANT

CCB Inc.

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Growing up in Milo in a family of teachers, Beth Sturtevant never imagined she would one day be the principal owner of one of the most established construction management companies in Maine.

She was one of only three females in her engineering class at the University of Maine. An interest in surveying had steered her away from forestry and in the direction of engineering. She earned a degree in civil engineering technology in 1981 and joined the CCB team in 1982 as a field engineer.

Sturtevant was given the opportunity to be a 10 percent owner soon after joining the Westbrook-based construction and project management company. In 1985 she became a CCB project manager, and in 1990 she earned her certificate in management from the University of Southern Maine. In 2004, Sturtevant purchased a majority and controlling share of CCB, becoming president/principal owner.

Though the company markets itself as a women-owned enterprise, Sturtevant says gender is not "the driving force" behind customers' decisions to do business with CCB or behind employees' desire to work there.

"Most people want to work with a good company in a good culture," she says. "I'm a very hands-on owner, setting direction, setting expectations, and bringing people along. Mostly it's about creating the culture where people want to work."

Since the company has been around so long (60-plus years), Sturtevant doesn't think of herself as an entrepreneur, but she does pride herself on her ability to set the direction of the business and keep it financially on course. She says her preparation as the vice president of operations for 10 years gave her the foundation she needed to take the reins as principal owner of a company that employs 115 people year round and 250 during the construction season.

While she spends more time behind a



Beth Sturtevant never imagined she would one day be the principal owner of CCB Inc. in Westbrook, one of the most established construction management companies in the state. *Photo by Andrew Rice*

desk than she does outdoors these days, Sturtevant is proud of how far she has come and loves being her own boss.

"You get to decide your direction," she says. "When you work for yourself, you have a lot more flexibility."

Q What were your most important needs in getting started?

A Having the opportunity presented to me and then me having the courage to seize upon the opportunity. I didn't really know what my "needs" were when I began. I definitely stumbled along, but just kept going because I was pretty sure I could do it. I was really capable at some things and other things, not so much. I worked really hard on the "not-so-much" stuff.

Q What was there about your upbringing that gave you the courage to venture out on your own?

A One that quickly comes to mind was to not shy away from working hard. My parents both were very hard-working people. My first job was having a paper route when I was 13 and I kept it until I graduated from high school. Then my father, who had retired from his job, took it over and kept it for many more years. I come from a family of girls, my mother and three sisters. My father was the only man in the house. My mother was a strong, capable force in our house and all of her daughters experienced that. There was not much "squashing-down" of the girls

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A (laughter) Grow a set and wear 'em proudly.

Q If you knew then what you do now, would you have done anything differently?

A Not much. It's important to hire people based on value systems, not experience. You can teach skills. You can't teach honesty and a solid work ethic. Also, go out on your

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into a circle that accepts the value of integrated medicine and is willing to collaborate."

Q What were your most important needs in getting started?

A The most important need was support – having the financial support in place to make it through the first steps, emotional support in starting a brand new venture, family support in following a non-corporate path. Perhaps most important is having a vision and the faith in oneself to succeed. A good marketing strategy (I like Duct Tape Marketing) and a good graphic designer to translate the vision into usable material is also helpful. (I like Murphy Empire and The Portland Designer here in Maine)

Q What was there about your upbringing that gave you the courage to venture out on your own?

A My father has been an independent business owner for my whole life with good success. When I decided to go into integrative medicine, it was automatically accepted that I would go into business for myself and follow in his shoes.

Q What do you think the advantages are of being a female entrepreneur?

A There are some resources geared toward women, so there are perhaps more resources for women. However, I don't think

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A Before you launch your business, line up all the things you have to have in advance to present yourself well and quickly. I spent three months creating a logo, photos, bio, resume. You want to pull together a nice package of information on yourself to present to the world. Also, use the best equipment and don't cut corners. Make sure you pay for things that are worth paying for. My monthly subscription to Lynda.com pays for itself. Finally, I advise women to think like a woman but talk like a man. Women tend to spend too much time giving complex answers when people want it short and sweet.

own sooner. Partners are for dancing. And, not that I didn't do this from the beginning, but never take anything for granted. Small businesses are families. You see your employees more than you do your own family. I had a "work spouse" who passed, and I am just glad I never took him for granted.

– Lucia Davies

there is an advantage overall.

Q What advice would you give an aspiring woman entrepreneur?

A If you can, do your venture on your own without giving away leadership to other people. You can do this. Get a good accountant and lawyer on your team early. Make sure your bookkeeping is taken care of from the beginning. Believe in yourself. Follow your intuition about decision making. If you need therapy or coaching during this time to keep clear accountability with your vision, invest in your self-worth. Money comes and goes, but clarity brings courage, which leads to success.

Q If you knew then what you know now, would you have done anything differently?

A It's been 14 years of being self-employed. If I knew how hard it would be from the beginning, I may have made other career choices. I would certainly not have brought other people into my first business venture, as the personal relationship pitfalls negatively affected our business model. Other than that, I am proud of the work I have done as an integrative medicine doc, and love my profession.

– Faith Gillman

Q If you knew then what you know now, would you have done anything differently?

A When I started, I was in my late 30s and technology was so new. Back then I tried to generalize. Now I realize I can't support every technology. Every two years, you start over because everything keeps changing. I've had to find my niche. But I just love computers and technology and I'm surprised how many women want nothing to do with them. There's no reason why women and girls shouldn't love this industry.

– Joanne Lannin

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in my house.

Q What do you think the advantages are of being a female entrepreneur?

A Well, in the construction world, it's unusual, but it doesn't get me work because of it. I don't feel like I have any particular advantage because I am a woman-owned construction business. Mostly, I consider myself a business owner of a construction company. I do feel like my perspective and ways of doing things and making decisions is influenced by my experiences of being raised a girl in a culture and society that has very strong ideas of what girls/women "should" do or how they "should" behave. I want girls and young women to know they, too, can be successful business owners in a field that has not traditionally been led by women. Construction is a great career; it's fun and rewarding and it's way cool to point out to your kids and your friends what you built.

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didn't I do this earlier? It's so much fun." But I couldn't have done it earlier. It took all of my experiences to get me here. I did go to Johnson and Wales and graduated seven years ago, but came out wondering, "What am I going to do with this?" But everything fell into place. I did need help, though, and when my partner Valerie retired from teaching we thought it would be a good time [to try a cooking school]. I love to play with fire and we enjoy entertaining people in our home.

Q What was there about your upbringing that gave you the courage to venture out on your own?

A I grew up in the early 1960s and was most influenced by two important women: my mother and Julia Child. Julia Child also influenced my mother, as she often cooked from Julia's books. One of the greatest moments of my life was when I was working as a Portland Phoenix food columnist and had the chance to meet Julia in Boston during a Boston University celebration of her life. I sent Julia the story and she replied with a very kind note about the article.

My mother was a very good cook and excellent baker. She was also theatrical, whimsical, and loved to entertain – which is a good thing since my father needed her to throw elaborate parties for his colleagues and clients. My father was a "madman" – he was an influential advertising executive in New York City and he hobnobbed with very important media people of the time. My mother set a beautiful table with the fin-

Q What advice would you give an aspiring woman entrepreneur?

A Really grow your knowledge of all things financial. You've got to understand the world of finances and how to leverage financial resources to succeed for the long-term. You've also got to be willing to put in the long hours in order to succeed and always surround yourself with people you trust and that trust you.

Q If you knew then what you know now, would you have done anything differently?

A There is always the benefit of hindsight and "lessons-learned" and there are lots of wrong decisions I made, but I can't think of anything of significance that I would have done differently. I've had good people around me throughout my career and that has made an immeasurable difference to me. I'm happy with how it has gone so far.

– Joanne Lannin

est china, linens and silver inherited from her mother. We frequently dined out at the finest restaurants (usually French) in New York City.

Q What do you think the advantages are of being a female entrepreneur?

A I love my small business. It's great fun to put all of my passions together. I don't know if being a woman has helped or hurt me. I never really think about that. I just think about being the best I can be, continuing to learn, continuing to be a caring teacher and fun hostess. There is no focus on gender; it doesn't seem to be a factor these days.

Q What advice would you give an aspiring woman entrepreneur?

A My advice to any young person would be to follow your passion. It can be difficult, there are many distractions and sometimes we get caught up in doing what we think we have to do. But you'll be happier and healthier if you stick to your passion; with it life is so much better. It doesn't mean it's the easy path but it will be the best path in the long run.

Q If you knew then what you know now, would you have done anything differently?

A I would have done this earlier. It's easier to do this kind of work when you're younger and stronger. It can be difficult later in life to take something like this on but it is also invigorating. The good news in this business is, you always eat!

– Faith Gillman