



Graduate Cooks Up Recipes for Success

Leah Perez was a picky eater growing up. And though she never tried a morsel on Multicultural Day, the third-grade tradition was the first time she realized she was “inexplicably fascinated by the ideology of food.”

“When Mrs. White asked the class what our favorite part of the project was, my answer confused her since I am sure I did not eat a single thing,” says Leah, 25, who graduated from St. Norbert Catholic School in 2010.

Surprisingly, Leah would go on to make a career out of food. As a recipe developer for Hoffman Media since January, Leah works closely with editors for various magazines such as Victoria and Southern Lady.

But her path into the kitchen was not a straight one. While at Rosary High School (now Rosary Academy), Leah says it seemed like everyone around her knew which career they wanted to explore.

“Whether it was law or medicine, somehow other 17-year-olds had a much clearer vision than I had,” Leah says. “I was that girl who brought cupcakes and cookies multiple times a week to share with my classmates; however, I always knew that the monotony of working in a restaurant or bakery was not where I envisioned myself, despite my obvious love for food.”

In 2018, Leah earned her bachelor’s degree from New York University with a dual major in Food Studies and Global Public Health, along with a minor in Anthropology.

“In college I originally wanted to study environmental science with a focus on organic agriculture but quickly changed my major to food studies when I realized it was everything I wanted to read about,” Leah says. “I loved studying the cultural elements of food so much. It is true that when you love something, it hardly feels like work.”

Leah worked as a butcher’s apprentice, cheesemonger and caterer, and eventually landed her first internship in a test



“
I was always very shy but
the staff at St. Norbert
did not allow me to
sink into my shell.
”

see PEREZ, see page 2
For recipes, see page 4



(Above left) SNCS graduate Leah Perez in 8th grade. (Above) Leah writes, tests and edits recipes based on a key ingredient or concept for national magazines.

**IN THIS
ISSUE:**
Updates on retiring staff,
students, upcoming
events & more!

ALUMNI in the NEWS

1980s

John Stratman (1988), who earned his bachelor's degree from Chapman University and master's from USC, is the senior director, Public Affairs & Brand Communications, for Kaiser Permanente Orange County.

1990s

After earning her bachelor's degree from USC and master's from California State University Fullerton, **Dina (Bartoloni) Mai** (1998) now works as assistant director of academic advising at Chapman University.

Dr. Michael McCoy (1999), who received his medical degree from Ross University School of Medicine, is working with St. Jude Heritage Medical Group in Fullerton as a specialist in general surgery.

2000s

For the last seven years, after earning a bachelor of fine arts in film production from Chapman University, **Mary Ostic** (2005) has been producing and editing TV promos for major networks such as NBC, CBS, ABC and FOX.

2010s

Rosary alum **Maddy Fetter** (2014) graduated this spring from Seton Hall University in South Orange, New Jersey, and will be working in the school's Office of Admissions.

Get Involved

Auction: Save the Date!

Don't be late for a very important date! Alumni and their families and former staff and faculty are invited to join St. Norbert Catholic School families at the 2022 Mad Hatters Ball dinner and auction Saturday Nov. 12 at the Santa Ana Elks Lodge. Proceeds from the annual event help ensure the future of SNCS and offset the operating budget to keep tuition affordable. For more information, please email events@saintnorbertschool.org or call (714) 637-6822.

Visit us at the Street Fair

SNCS eighth grade parents will be selling drink wristbands at the Orange Street Fair this Labor Day weekend Sept. 2-4 at the west Chapman entrance (near Wahoo's and Snooze restaurants). Stop by and say hi and support their efforts to raise funds for their Washington D.C. trip.

Invest in our Future

Donations are a wonderful way to honor a loved one who valued Catholic education or favorite teachers and their long-lasting impact. Please consider donating a monetary gift or non-cash financial instruments of any size, such as stocks or mutual

funds, to St. Norbert Catholic School. Our needs include:

- **SNCS Endowment Fund:** Funds are used to reduce or stabilize the school's deficit.
- **Tuition Assistance Fund:** Gifts help families struggling to meet their child(ren)'s tuition costs.
- **Legacy of Light:** Contributions help finance campus projects and maintenance.
- **Kathy Oldham Children's Fund:** Supports our school in a way that honors our dear friend Kathy Oldham by funding art classes every trimester.

Donations are tax deductible. For more information or to donate, please call (714) 637-6822 or email info@saintnorbertschool.org.

Donate your Time

Alumna Michelle (Ortiz) Navarro (1990) is heading up St. Norbert Church's Christian Service food distribution and is looking for volunteers 9 a.m. to noon on Saturdays. Join alumni, current families and parishioners as they assemble bags of food for more than 150 families each week behind the St. Norbert Family & Youth Center. To sign up, email christianservice@stnorbertchurch.org.



Leah Perez is enjoying her best life in Birmingham, Alabama.

PEREZ, from page 1

kitchen. From there, she continued to build her resume based on getting back into the test kitchen environment.

"Not only was I able to indulge in my passion for researching food, I was also cooking something new every day," Leah says. "I get to be on my feet, write recipes, work in a multimedia environment and talk to like-minded, food-obsessed colleagues. It doesn't hurt to see my name printed in a magazine, either."

Today, Leah lives in Birmingham and enjoys both cooking for friends and going out to eat and exploring the city.

"There is nothing more enjoyable

see PEREZ, see page 3

Faculty & Staff Notes

Mrs. Bartholemy closes one chapter to begin the next

Lisa Bartholemy was working as a special education aide and resource specialist at Paul Revere Elementary School in Anaheim when her children started at St. Norbert School.

As a SNCS parent, she helped with auctions and other school events. Then when an aide was leaving, she contacted the principal at the time, Sharon Dolan, and asked to fill the opening. The year was 1998.

This past June, Mrs. Bartholemy retired as the school librarian with plans to slow down the pace of life and enjoy more time with her grandson.

Mrs. Bartholemy will be remembered for introducing the Accelerated Reading program at the school and helping students reach their goal each trimester. During her tenure, she also doubled the size of the library, which was originally housed in the current teacher's lounge, and added thousands of books to the shelves.

Top annual readers have been honored on the AR Readers Plaque that hangs in the library, thanks to Mrs. Bartholemy, and scores of students



Mrs. Bartholemy retired in June after 24 years at SNCS.

have enjoyed the comfort of the library during recess.

She says she will miss the students and parent volunteers, who she'd treat to a homecooked lunch at the end of every school year.

"I loved everything about the job," Mrs. Bartholemy says, "I was always looking to improve the library. It was a fun place to be."

PEREZ, from page 2

than sharing a good meal with the ones you love," Leah says. "Birmingham is also surrounded by some beautiful ecological sites. Where I live right now is across the street from a botanical garden, so I love walking there after work or going on a sunny afternoon with a book."

Leah is grateful for the encouragement she received at SNCS, especially from former 8th grade teacher Deanna O'Keefe.

"Not only was she an incomparable grammar teacher, she also made sure we were prepared for our next step," Leah says. "I would not have succeeded as a freshman at Rosary, to the extent that I did, without the research skills

she taught us. Without that foundation, it would have been a lot more difficult to get into AP courses and eventually go on to NYU."

SNCS also helped Leah conquer her fear of speaking in front of others.

"Today my job and daily life involve working with so many different people and the ability to communicate effectively is invaluable," Leah says. "I was always very shy but the staff at St. Norbert did not allow me to sink into my shell. In 8th grade, I played the Virgin Mary in our Christmas performance and sang a song. My parents still talk about it 12 years later."

BONUS! Check out two of the recipes that garnered Leah a spot in the magazine kitchen earlier this year, page 4.

Rosary alum **Shannon Mora** (2014) graduated from the University of Arizona this spring and is now working in global marketing for Smith + Nephew medical technology in Andover, Massachusetts.

After four years of cheerleading at Mater Dei High School, **Chloe Presa** (2018) has taken her pompoms to USC where she is cheering on the Trojans and studying human biology.

Mater Dei graduate **Colleen Angel Fano** (2018) was named a semi-finalist in the OC Artist of the Year for Vocal Music out of 91 talented entries last spring. Colleen is now attending Benedictine College in Kansas.

Andrew Loughran (2018), named Servite valedictorian and '22 Athlete of the Year, is attending University of Notre Dame this fall.

2020s

In June, alumni **Jacee Bauermann, Iza Berlanga, Maxwell Beckman, Serena Luna, Christian Panganiban, Brooke Skipton, Sydney Swenson and Isabella Walker** (2020) and parents enjoyed their own East Coast Expedition with visits to Washington DC, Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York and Boston despite the cancellation of their class trip due to COVID-19 two years ago.

What have you been up to? We'd love to hear! Email your Alumni Update to alumni@saintnorbert-school.org.



Concepts for COOKING

Leah Perez developed the following dishes during the audition process for her job as a recipe developer for Hoffman Media.

“They are recipes I am proud of that really kick-started my journey,” Leah says.

Meat Lover's Deep Dish Calzone Pie

Makes 1 9-inch deep dish pie; serves 6-8

Ingredients:

1 cup whole milk ricotta
4 slices thick cut bacon, cut into ½-inch pieces
½ cup sliced pepperoni, cut into quarters
1 cup diced yellow onion
1 pound hot italian sausage, casings removed
1 ½ teaspoons garlic powder, divided
1 cup marinara sauce
1 ½ pounds store-bought pizza dough, divided
2 ½ cups (10 ounces) low-moisture part-skim shredded mozzarella, divided
2 teaspoons olive oil, divided
¼ cup plus 1 tablespoon grated parmesan, divided
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
1 tablespoon chopped Italian flat leaf parsley
Warm marinara sauce, to serve

Instructions:

- Adjust oven rack to lower third position and heat oven to 450°F.
- Line baking sheet with two layers of paper towels. Spread ricotta in an even layer over paper towels and allow to drain for 30 minutes.
- Meanwhile, heat large saute pan over medium heat and add bacon. Cook, stirring occasionally, 3 minutes or until bacon is soft and fat is beginning to render. Stir in pepperoni and cook until bacon and pepperoni get crisp and golden brown, 5 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, place bacon and pepperoni onto a paper towel lined plate to drain.
- Discard all but 1 tablespoon of fat. Add onion and saute for 2 minutes until translucent. Add sausage and cook until sausage is brown and crumbly, 5 to 7 minutes. Add 1 teaspoon garlic powder and cook until fragrant, 30 seconds. Stir in marinara sauce and bring to a simmer. Allow sauce to reduce slightly, about 5 minutes. Fold in bacon and pepperoni. Remove from heat.
- Brush 9-inch deep-dish pie plate with 1 teaspoon olive oil. Place 1 pound of dough onto lightly floured surface and roll into 14-inch circle, about ½-inch thick. Transfer to pie plate, easing dough in so it covers bottom of the plate and allowing excess dough to drape over sides.
- Sprinkle 1 ½ cups mozzarella over surface of dough. Spoon meat mixture over cheese and spread into an even layer. Dollop drained ricotta onto meat and spread evenly. Sprinkle remaining cup of mozzarella. Dust surface evenly with ¼ cup parmesan.
- Roll remaining ½ pound dough into a 10-inch circle, about ½ inch thick. Gently transfer to pie dish, trimming top crust overhang to ½ inch. Pinch top and bottom crust together, rolling excess bottom crust over the top.
- Brush top of calzone with remaining teaspoon of olive oil. Using sharp knife, cut four 1-inch vents. Transfer calzone pie to oven and bake until crust is golden brown, about 30-35 minutes. Halfway through baking, cover completely with foil and rotate dish. Remove calzone from oven and place on wire rack for 10 minutes.
- Microwave butter and ½ teaspoon garlic powder in 10 second increments until melted and fragrant, about 30 seconds.
- Carefully remove calzone from pie plate and set on cutting board. Brush all over with garlic butter and sprinkle with 1 tablespoon grated parmesan and parsley. Allow to cool for 20 more minutes. Serve with warm marinara sauce.

Notes:

Draining the ricotta controls the moisture of the calzone and helps achieve a clean cut. Gently rolling dough around pin helps ensure an easy transfer.

Oven Bake Mushroom “Risotto” with Blackened Shrimp

Serves 4

Ingredients:

1 pound colossal shrimp (13-15), peeled and deveined, tails removed
¼ cup olive oil, divided
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 tablespoon blackening seasoning
4 ½ tablespoons unsalted butter
8 ounces baby bella mushrooms, quartered
3 teaspoons kosher salt, divided
1 ¼ teaspoons coarsely ground black pepper
1 cup diced yellow onion
½ cup diced celery
1 ½ cups arborio rice, or any short-grained rice
1 tablespoon minced garlic
¾ cup dry white wine
4 cups warm low sodium chicken stock, divided
1 cup grated parmesan cheese, plus extra to serve
2 tablespoons Italian flat leaf parsley
Lemon wedges to serve

Instructions:

- Preheat oven to 350°F.
- Pat shrimp dry with paper towels. Place in medium bowl with 1 tablespoon olive oil, lemon juice and blackening seasoning. Toss to combine. Cover and allow to marinate 15 minutes while preparing other ingredients.
- Heat 12-inch cast iron skillet over medium-high heat. Melt 1 tablespoon butter and 1 tablespoon olive oil. Add shrimp and allow to cook on each side until curled and pink, about 4-6 minutes. Remove shrimp and place on plate.
- In same skillet, melt ½ tablespoon butter and 1 tablespoon olive oil over medium heat. Add mushrooms and cook until all liquid is evaporated and they begin to brown, 5-7 minutes. Season with ½ teaspoon salt and ¼ teaspoon black pepper. Remove mushrooms and place on plate with shrimp. Wipe out skillet with paper towels.
- In the same skillet, melt 1 tablespoon butter and 1 tablespoon olive oil over medium heat. Add onion, celery, 1 teaspoon salt and ½ teaspoon black pepper and cook until vegetables are tender and translucent, 3-5 minutes. Add rice and cook until rice is translucent around the edges, about 3 minutes. Add garlic and cook until fragrant, 30 seconds. Add white wine and allow to reduce, stirring constantly for 2-3 minutes. Stir in 3 cups warm broth, 1 ½ teaspoons salt and ½ teaspoon black pepper and bring to a simmer. Carefully cover skillet with foil. Transfer to oven and bake 20 minutes.
- Remove skillet from oven and remove foil. Place over medium heat and add remaining cup of broth, 2 tablespoons of butter and parmesan. Stir thoroughly until risotto becomes creamy, 2-3 minutes.
- Add shrimp and mushrooms and stir until heated through. Top with parsley and serve with lemon wedges and extra parmesan.

Notes:

While combining olive oil with butter does not actually alter the smoke point, we like them combined here because the flavors blend nicely and just butter would be overwhelming. Microwave broth in a large measuring cup or microwave safe bowl until steaming.