



Culinary camaraderie in a  
meal crafted by many hands

*feast of the*  
**SEVEN  
FISHES**

by CATHERINE CURRIN photography by FORREST MASON  
recipes by LIZ GRANDCHAMP holiday decorations courtesy ACQUISITIONS, LTD.









If you've eaten out in downtown Raleigh long enough, chances are you know Liz Grandchamp — or at least recognize her signature grin and backwards cap. Grandchamp has worked in kitchens her entire life, from sandwich shops to fine dining establishments. Born and raised in Bethesda, Maryland, she moved to Raleigh in 2007 to attend North Carolina State University, followed by the Culinary Institute of America in St. Helena, California. Here in Raleigh, she's worked front of house at Crawford & Son, Locals Oyster Bar, and Oakwood Pizza Box, and has consulted for Standard Beer + Food as well as Plates Kitchen.

Sitting at Grandchamp's table is always a treat — food and drink flowing, deep conversation with folks you've known forever or maybe just met. She fondly calls her chosen family her "land of misfit toys," a gathering of former colleagues, vendors

she's built relationships with, and customers who turned into friends. "I want to be that person that brings so many eclectic groups together," Grandchamp says. And with this many culinary pros in the mix, any dinner is as much about preparing together as it is about sitting down to eat, each person lending their talents, expertise, and traditions in a delectable jumble of festive dining that often goes well into the night.

One of Grandchamp's family traditions is the Feast of the Seven Fishes. It's an Italian-American meal typically served on Christmas Eve that incorporates a variety of fish and other seafood. "It's something my parents grew up doing in Rhode Island," she says, but until recently, she'd never hosted it herself.

So she made a plan: Grandchamp would host 20 or so of her friends for her take on the family-style meal. Jenny and Mike Farmer — some of her customers turned

friends — offered to host the feast in their recently renovated Oakwood home. "We met Liz at Crawford & Son, and bonded over our love for Napa," says Jenny. "We began following her, and she has the coolest friends! We always enjoyed sharing food and conversation with them." For this many guests, they needed both the dining room and living room, with two folding tables and a dozen loaner chairs added to their regular setup. Tablecloths and a long centerpiece of greenery — graciously loaned by the folks at Acquisitions, Ltd. — pieced them all together, and candlelight cozied the space right up.

For the menu, Grandchamp incorporated longtime family recipes, like steamed New England clams, and some on-the-fly improvisations, like a saffron fish stew over pastini. "I wanted to pick food that I like to eat, but also introduce new dishes and ingredients," says Grandchamp. "Some of the dishes, like whole fish and octopus





#### PREP TIME

*Opposite page:* Paul Tuorto, Rachel Poe, Halsey Merritt, and Liz Porcelli working on the meal. *This page, clockwise from top:* Pink porgy on a bed of salt; fettuccine in progress; Liz Grandchamp samples the fish stew.







#### STARTERS

*Clockwise from top:* Beverages; Boulted Bread with buffalo milk butter and razor clams; guests dig into the anti-pasto platter, which features tinned fish. *Opposite page:* Bubbles from Raleigh Wine Shop.







## MENU

### Italian Antipasto Board

Tinned fish, marinated vegetables, cheese, cured meats, fruit

### Boulted Bread with Buffalo Milk Butter

Topped with tinned razor clams

### New England Steamed Clams

Narragansett beer, celery, onions, butter

### Saffron Fish Stew

Onion, fennel, shrimp, langoustine, pastini

### Radicchio Salad

Celery, shaved bottarga

### Squid Ink Pasta

Shrimp, garlic butter

### Fettuccine with Mussels

White wine, garlic

### Roasted Vegetables

Cauliflower, fennel, broccolini

### Italian Desserts

Pizzelles, rainbow cookies, sfogliatelle, cannolis

## ABOUT THE ANTIPASTO BOARD

Antipasto boards are the charcuterie boards of Italians, and typically include an assortment of marinated vegetables, cheese, cured meats, dried and fresh fruit, and in this case, tinned fish. “When building an antipasto board, you want to make sure you’re hitting all the flavors: salty, sweet, sour, and bitter,” says Grandchamp. “And don’t forget to add a pop of color to your board, like roasted red peppers, olives, or salami.” She finds cured meats and sides at Alimentari at Left Bank, olives, peppers, and dried fruits at Wegmans and Whole Foods, and tinned fish at Raleigh Wine Shop. “The best way to eat tinned fish is to start with bread with butter — in this case, ciabatta from Boulted Bread and the Delitia Buffalo Milk butter from Bongiorno & Son in Lafayette Village — and then scoop your choice of fish on top,” says Grandchamp.

salad, are traditional to Seven Fishes, but some are just what I enjoy.”

The meal started around sunset, at a coffee table on the front porch loaded with a fish-centric charcuterie board, featuring cheese and salami from North Raleigh purveyor Bongiorno & Son. On the side, crusty Boulted Bread smeared with buffalo milk butter and a scoop of razor clams — each crusty, buttery bite offering a salty finish. Then the guests moved into the kitchen, where the island became a happy mess of slathering clams in butter with Grandchamp and her sous chefs bustling through the food prep.

Before everyone sat down, Grandchamp offered a quick toast, a thanks to her parents and friends for making the night happen. Then guests squeezed in elbow-to-elbow at the table, where there was just enough space to set down a radicchio salad topped with shaved bottarga, the fish stew, and two types of shellfish-infused pasta, each cooked al dente with a

perfect blend of sauce and spices. Guests debated their favorites; most couldn’t choose.

For the main course, Grandchamp prepared whole snapper from Locals Seafood two ways — one salt-cured, cooked on a bed of lemons, and another baked with potatoes, olives, and salsa verde — served family-style around the boisterous table. Grandchamp’s take on fish melts in your mouth, especially topped with one of her decadent, homemade butters (infused with herbs, pesto, or bone marrow) on top. And along the side — for anyone who still had space — she served roasted fennel, cauliflower, and broccolini. The only breaks in conversation were sighs of contentment, or the quick pop of bottles as more wine was poured. For those who made it to dessert, well after midnight: rainbow cookies, sfogliatelle, and mini cannolis from Bongiorno & Son, with a homemade batch of limoncello and pizzelles, courtesy of friend Paul Tuorto.



## New England Style Clams

- 2 to 3 24-ounce Narragansett beers
- 1 cup kosher salt
- 4 large white onions, roughly chopped
- 4 heads of garlic, cut in half
- 2 heads of celery, roughly chopped
- 100 littleneck clams (depending on the season, find at Locals Seafood or Wegmans)
- 1 stick butter

*Fill a large stockpot halfway with water and add beer to get equal parts beer and water. Add salt and bring to a boil, then add vegetables. Lower to medium heat and cook for 20 minutes, until the vegetables are starting to get tender.*

*Add the clams, bring to a boil and cook until clams start to open. In a separate bowl or cup, melt the butter.*

*Strain clams and tender vegetables into a bowl, pour some butter over them, and enjoy.*

## Saffron Fish Stew

- 4 white onions, thinly sliced
- 3 leeks, thinly sliced
- 3 heads of garlic, thinly sliced
- 1 pound carrots, thinly sliced
- 1 whole stalk of celery, thinly sliced
- 2 fennel bulbs, thinly sliced
- Seafood Stock (see recipe on page 65)
- 2 cups pastina pasta, cooked
- 2 pounds uncooked shrimp
- 1-pound white fish (bass or flounder), cut into cubes
- 1 pound langoustine
- 12 to 15 threads of saffron
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 cup Italian parsley, chopped

*In a large pot, sauté onions, leeks, and garlic together, until soft and translucent (not brown). Season with salt and pepper. Add in your carrots, sauté until soft, and then add celery and fennel. Season with a little more salt and pepper.*

*If you start to get color on your vegetables, deglaze the pot with your seafood stock.*

*Once all the vegetables are soft, but not completely cooked through, add in half of your saffron strands and stir. Add in the remaining saffron threads and enough stock to cover the vegetables, stir, and bring to a boil. Once it's come to a boil, cover and simmer on low.*

*While your soup is simmering, cook your pastina in a small pot. Reserve and set aside.*

*When you are ready to serve, remove the cover, and add in your fish. Stir until partially cooked. Add in your shrimp and langoustine. Remove from heat, and continue to stir until the shrimp is pink. Add in your pastina, season to taste, finish with chopped parsley and serve!*





#### NEXT COURSE

*Opposite page: Sharing New England style clams. This page, clockwise from top: The clams; mussels over fettuccine; saffron fish stew with shrimp and langoustine; radicchio salad with shaved bottarga on top.*







#### MAIN COURSE

*Clockwise from top:*  
Roasted fennel;  
baked fish with  
potatoes, olives, and  
salsa verde; squid  
ink pasta with garlic  
butter shrimp; roast-  
ed cauliflower and  
broccolini. *Opposite*  
*page:* Guests at the  
table for the meal.







Grandchamp's parents, Patty Barrett and Gary Grandchamp, were there to assist, helping chop, assemble, and oversee the family recipes. And at every part of the meal, Grandchamp's "misfits" pitched in: Tuorto and Halsey Merritt, a wine representative — both longtime friends of Grandchamp's — worked together to prepare a handmade linguine that was tossed with mussels. Liz Porcelli and Rachel Poe from the Raleigh Wine Shop ensured drinks were flowing all night, from dry French bubbles for toasting to a light Sicilian red that paired with the decadent pastas. "I had friends take off work to help me prepare for this," says Grandchamp. "They all have their own jobs, lives, but are still there to help."

This camaraderie — and the collaborations across restaurants, shops, and vendors that Grandchamp has found across the hospitality industry — are,

she says, what make Raleigh so special. "I love that there is a bond between the hospitality community here," she says. It's with the help of these folks that she's taken the leap from front-of-house to her own outfit, recently launching Grandchamp Hospitality, a full-service catering operation that's approachable but full of flavor, as well as a spring and summer sandwich popup, The Shop: "We make food that is easy to enjoy and understand, even if you've never experienced it."

For Grandchamp, food is more than a recipe: it's a community built with people across the industry. "Raleigh is a tight-knit community where we have each other's backs. We treat each other with the same hospitality that we offer our guests, and we just love being together to eat and drink and just relax," she says. "Food and wine are the vehicles in which we build our connections."

## Seafood Stock

- 6 white onions, quartered
- 1 pound carrots, roughly chopped
- 2 stalks of celery, roughly chopped
- 2 tops and bottoms of fennel (fronds included)
- 3 tops and bottoms of leeks
- 3 to 4 spines from white, mild fish (flounder, bass)
- 2 pounds shells, tails, and heads of shrimp

*Place all the vegetables, fish, and shells into a large pot. Fill with water and bring to a boil. Once boiling, bring down to a simmer for 2 to 4 hours (the longer it simmers, the more concentrated the flavor).*

*Strain the stock and discard the bones. This should yield 10 to 12 quarts of stock.*



## Baked Fish with Potatoes, Olives & Salsa Verde

3 to 4 whole pound Pink Porgy (you can also use snapper, sea bass, or another thick, white fish)

1 bag rainbow baby potatoes

1 cup salt

1 cup pitted Castelvetrano olives

4 lemons, sliced into wheels

Salt and pepper to taste

Head of garlic, peeled and roasted (optional)

Salsa Verde (*recipe below*)

*Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Fill a large pot with water, bring to a boil, and add the salt, then bring to boil again. Add the potatoes, and bring to a simmer for 20 minutes (or until barely fork tender). Drain into an ice bath.*

*Score the fish skin along the sides in strokes. Rub both sides of the fish with olive oil, salt, and pepper. Set aside.*

*Mix the potatoes, olives, and two lemons with a little bit of olive oil, salt and pepper (can add roasted garlic, if desired). Place the mixture onto the bottom of a lined baking pan, then place the fish on top. Put in the oven for 15 to 18 minutes. Check the fish: if the skin starts to get too brown, you can tent it with aluminum foil. Cook for another 3 to 4 minutes, until the flesh looks white, or you reach an internal temperature of 145 degrees. Remove from the oven and rest.*

*Take the remainder of your lemons and arrange them on your serving platter. Spoon out the potatoes, olives, and lemons from under the fish. Place the cooked fish on your platter. Add salsa verde on top or serve as a side.*

## Salsa Verde

2 bunches parsley

1 bunch dill

1 bunch cilantro

2 tablespoons capers

Zest and juice from 1 lemon

2 teaspoons red pepper flakes

Salt and pepper to taste

2 cloves of garlic, grated

Extra virgin olive oil

*Add herbs to a food processor. Once slightly chopped, add in capers, lemon juice, salt, pepper, red pepper flakes, and garlic. Start to add your olive oil slowly, until you start to get a paste-like consistency. Taste and adjust seasoning. It should have bright acidity, with a briny finish.*



## Squid Ink Pasta with Shrimp Butter

3 pounds whole shrimp

1 cup salt

2 sticks unsalted butter

5 garlic cloves, peeled and roasted

2 pounds squid ink pasta (can be found at Alimentari)

Zest of 2 lemons

2 tablespoons chives

1 bunch of parsley, chopped

*Remove the shells, heads, and tails from your shrimp. Place these pieces into a pot, fill with water and bring to a boil. Keep at medium-high heat for 45 minutes to an hour to create a stock, then strain out shells and set aside the stock.*

*Fill a pot with water and cup of salt, bring to a boil. While the water comes to a boil, in a separate large saucepan, place one stick of butter on low, along with the roasted garlic. Heat on medium, and once bubbling, deglaze with your shrimp stock. You want to have a medium-thick consistency, and can always add more butter.*

*Take your shrimp (seasoned with salt and pepper)*

*and place in shrimp butter. Sauté on low until slightly pink. Add your chopped parsley and lemon zest and stir.*

*Once your water has boiled, drop in the squid ink pasta and cook 4 to 5 minutes or according to package directions. Once you have an al dente noodle, use tongs to remove the pasta and place directly into your shrimp sauce. Toss until the pasta is coated, season with salt and pepper to taste.*

*Remove off the heat, plate and finish with chives for a pop of color.*





**EAT, DRINK,  
& BE MERRY!**

*Opposite page: Liz Grandchamp. This page, above: Friends and family offer a toast to the chefs at the extra-long table. Below: Italian treats alongside home-made limoncello from Paul Tuorto.*

