**The Indulgent Foodie Cooks with Ambition**

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[ryley\_murray@finefoods.com](mailto:ryley_murray@finefoods.com) 647-287-7769

When asked what prompted her to start her own line of specialty foods, Nadine Spencer talks about how she got fired from working for another line.

“My boss said I wasn’t a team player,” Spencer says, a sly grin escaping her perfectly penciled mouth, “Can you imagine that?”

After spending an hour with this stylish and lovely woman, I *can* imagine that. It’s not as if Spencer doesn’t exude warmth and friendliness, because she does; it’s just that she is a visionary and a woman who will always follow her vision, even if that means doing it on her own; which is exactly what she’s done.

Upon leaving the aforementioned procurement job, Spencer, also known as The Indulgent Foodie, set out as an entrepreneur and created The Nadine Spencer Fine Food Company. Her passion for healthy, delicious food shines through in her line of chef-inspired products, *Q Gourmet*. These products are created by some of the top chefs in the world and have been approved by such celebrities as George Clooney and the White House chef. Spencer is breaking new ground with these products as they are what she calls fashionable foods, “you can find some of our products at Holt Renfrew,” she states proudly.

Spencer has made a name for herself as a consultant to large chain grocery stores, top chefs, and specialty food stores, on new trends in the food industry. She also frequently writes restaurant reviews for The Toronto Star, The Toronto Sun, Women’s Post and The New York Times. She confesses that her favourite publication to write for is the Times, “because they pay for your wine as well as dinner,” she says with a laugh.

Clearly, Spencer loves her job. She describes her products with such passion that her listeners are left with their mouths watering. “I love food. I love to cook and try new things.”

After mulling over the question of a favourite type of cuisine, Spencer explains why she can’t decide, “Every country has its own specialty dish that they do really well. For example, where I’m from in Jamaica, fish is always cooked to perfection. Paris has incredible cheese and of course our Chinese food can’t even come close to what you can get in Beijing.

However, Spencer does have a favourite dish and she recalls it with a glowing smile, “Lobster risotto! I tried it in Italy and fell in love. I actually just had one of my friend’s, and Canada’s top chef coincidentally, over to my house the other night and he re-created it for me, and it was incredible!”

Spencer’s life ambitions do not end with food; she also volunteers her time to several organizations designed to help women get on their feet and achieve their business goals. She sits on the governing circle of Accelerating Women Entrepreneurs (AWE), an organization that empowers women from around the world to become entrepreneurs.

“Being a female entrepreneur can be very difficult. You need to be aggressive and assertive while still maintaining your integrity. You don’t ask people what they want; you tell them what they want. That takes some guts. With AWE, we try to instill that attitude in women.”

The Indulgent Foodie also volunteers at the YMCA, the Scarborough Women’s Centre and the Junior League of Toronto. She describes her most recent volunteer duty at McLean House, “I was literally on site helping to build homes with a hard hat on, working on my lap top, which also had its own version of a hard hat on for extra protection. I had to hire an assistant to do my actual job while I volunteered my time finishing this project because it was so important to me. I loved every minute. ”

It may be hard to believe that a woman with so much on the go could have a personal life, but Spencer, being a true renaissance woman, manages to be happily married and has two daughters, who are clearly her proudest accomplishment.

Her overwhelming love for her family helps explain why Spencer wants to create delicious food that is all natural and healthy. She wants her daughters to grow up in a home where they are surrounded by nutritious food. Coming from a family of 14 children, Spencer says that her love of cooking comes directly from her own mother, who was always entertaining. Spencer definitely realizes the power women hold, in her industry in particular.

“When you’re trying to get a consumer to buy healthy food, you have to start with the mothers,” she says of her marketing strategies.

“When a mother can feed an entire family on less than five dollars by buying Kraft Dinner and canned processed vegetables, it’s difficult to get her to see the long term value in switching to fresh, healthy ingredients. That’s our biggest challenge, “ however, Spencer maintains her optimism, “I do believe that most consumers are becoming more aware of health-conscious choices and they do want to eat right, even if it means spending a little more.”

What’s next for the Indulgent Foodie? Never short on ambition, Spencer hopes to conquer the US market within the next few years. This shouldn’t be too difficult as she’s already won over President Obama’s personal chef with her *Q Gourmet Smokey BBQ Sauce*. Spencer was smart enough to ensure she had a spot at a trade show in Washington rumored to have the White House chef in attendance. Sure enough, the chef showed up and after sampling her sauce he had to bring it home for supper at the White House that very evening. It gets delivered by the case to Camp David on a regular basis now. That’s how you conquer your dreams, according to Nadine Spencer.

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