

Cooking from Scratch

Two entrepreneurs trade on their passion for food

Heirloom Meals

While taking a workshop designed to help realize career possibilities a few years ago, Carole Murko, a former municipal bonds trader with a master's degree in economics—and no stranger to bold career moves—surprised even herself. After making her way up the corporate ladder in the financial industry, single-handedly launching a brand for young people and founding an interior design and real estate practice, Murko realized what she really wanted to do was to be Martha Stewart. *You've got to be kidding me*, was her first thought. "But it never left me," Murko says of the desire to host her own cooking and lifestyle show. "So I thought, what is it I have to offer? What's unique about my experience?"

What became clear to Murko was that food was the central theme growing up in her three-generation household and she had a wealth of experience, family tradition—and family recipes—that she wanted to pass on. She decided to call her show Heirloom Meals. After studying the market for cooking shows and books she realized she'd not only found a niche, but a hot topic. Because it is based on local and sustainable food, family recipes and entertaining, Murko says her concept "coincides with a big locally grown slow food movement. Everyone is coming back to the home cooked meal."



Carole Murko

With little knowledge of how to develop her idea, Murko reached out; through a friend, she met Adrienne Hammel, a food and lifestyle TV producer. Hammel, excited by Murko's passion (evident the moment you meet her) agreed to produce her demo, which they shot last October. With final cut in hand, Hammel secured a meeting with American Public Television in Boston.

Murko went to the meeting fully prepared to make the case for Heirloom Meals. Before she had a chance, APT president Cynthia Fenneman said, "We love it! We love everything about it, we love the name, we love you, we love your style, we love the premise..." But, Murko says, "They love me, they want the program... and they don't provide any funding." Disappointed but undeterred, she immediately set to work securing meetings with the chief marketing officers of corporations like Visa and Kraft. She got great feedback,

but no funding—budgets for "cause marketing" on public stations that don't allow product placement have been severely cut.

Originally reluctant, Murko decided to pursue some other options. She sent her demo to the Food Network despite fears that she might lose creative control, and met with a group that does advertising aggregation in Los Angeles. They use demos to secure advertisers and then take it to networks—along with a large share of the profits. But Murko is determined to get Heirloom Meals off the ground any

way she can.

As another means of promoting her concept, she's decided to write a cookbook. She's also blogging (heirloommeals.blogspot.com), using social media to promote it, has joined board of Berkshire Grown and recently did a food demo on NBC's Albany affiliate. She's been thinking about how the market for media has been changing, and is in talks to create some webisodes. "At the end of the day if I can't get it going I'll come up with plan D or E or F," she says, unwilling to give up on what she says is, "by far the most fulfilling and exciting project I've worked on."