



Celebrate Spring!

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JON CANCELINO

Gale Gand dishes about spring menus for Easter and Passover and the art of brunch! The renowned author, TV host, and executive pastry chef for Tru trained at La Varenne in Paris and then moved to New York City where she worked at Gotham Bar and Grill. There, her desserts were awarded three stars by *New York Times* food critic Bryan Miller. Gale returned to Chicago in 1993, working at four-star Charlie Trotter's before embarking on a number of successful restaurant ventures and opening the world-class fine dining establishment Tru with Rick Tramonto in 1999. Most important to Gale, though, is her devotion to her family and three children, and the love of sharing her passion for food with people and families of all ages.

We at *Sheridan Road* had the opportunity to watch Gale cook during our photo shoot for *Gale Gand's Brunch!* (released April 2010), sample Gale's fabulous strata and melt-in-your-mouth macaroons, and chat with the down-to-earth and devoted mom about her past year and what to expect next. By Elaine Slayton

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Coconut Macaroon and Chocolate Tartlettes

Makes 16

1/2 cup sugar

2 egg whites

1 1/2 cups unsweetened desiccated or flaked coconut**

(not the sweetened, shredded kind)

1 cup heavy cream

8 ounces semi-sweet chocolate, chopped
a few toasted almonds slices

Heat the oven to 350 degrees.

Mix sugar, eggs whites, and coconut together in a mixing bowl with a wooden spoon. (The recipe can be made up to this point and kept refrigerated up to three days in advance.) Grease foil cupcake papers and place in a muffin tin. Place a spoonful of the mixture in the foil and spread it around slightly with the back of the spoon, making the sides a little higher than the center. Bake until light golden, about 15 to 20 minutes. Let cool completely in the pans. Remove them from the pan and peel off the foil. Place a large spoonful of the ganache on top and place a few sliced almonds on for garnish.

To make the ganache filling, heat the cream in a small saucepan until just to melt the chocolate, then whisk it smooth. Let it sit at room temperature, covered, at least three hours or overnight to set.

**I use desiccated coconut from the bulk section at Whole Foods.

What have you been up to since *Sheridan Road* last interviewed you in 2008?

I spent six months of the year on a book tour promoting my latest book, *Gale Gand's Brunch!*, traveling to places from New York and Dallas to Louisville and Madison, Wisconsin. I've also been doing a lot of cooking demonstrations, including a segment on the *Today Show* with Al Roker, on which I prepared Baked Eggs in Ham Cups, pictured on the cover of *Gale Gand's Brunch!*, and Almond Crusted Ciabatta French Toast.

After spending your career perfecting and creating fine desserts, what inspired you to write a cookbook about brunch that includes everything from egg dishes to salads?

For one, I love and missed this type of food, especially as a pastry chef working early in the morning. We don't eat breakfast. And I love fried egg sandwiches! It grew out of my love for eggs. I began seeing the crossovers between how eggs work in both egg-based desserts and brunch foods. I make bread pudding all the time, and it's not much different to make a savory bread pudding, or strata. Instead of raspberries and sugar, I use ingredients such as ham and broccoli.

I also wanted to write a book to celebrate the spring holidays of Easter and Passover and find a way to entertain that didn't involve elaborate dinners that take more preparation than brunch and go late into the evening.

And, the book has struck a cord with people and been popular from day one. People love brunch, eggs are cheap, and perhaps the economy is an influence.

Can you say more about the entertaining aspect of brunch?

It is common to feel isolated from the experience of having multiples. My husband and I have five-year-old twin girls, Ruby and Ella, and son Gio (13). With a full family and career, it is very difficult to pull off a dinner party. It excludes the children.



often goes late into the night, and requires more planning, elaborate preparation, and cost.

But I could do brunch. It's typically held on a Saturday or Sunday and lasts from about 10 a.m. – 2 p.m., with people coming and going when they can. I set up a buffet, a separate station for self-serve drinks including a signature drink to simplify beverages. It is family friendly, and the food is really flexible. The food is quick to make and many dishes can be made ahead of time such as the Strata, which can sit overnight and then be popped into the oven.

Tell us more about brunch food, how you decided to structure *Gale Gand's Brunch!*, and how you chose which recipes to put in and which to leave out?

Deciding what to put in was very hard when I was only allotted 75 recipes! Even now I think of things I wanted to include but couldn't. But I knew that there had to be an egg chapter, because eggs are the backbone of brunch. And then I had to include a section on the five mother dishes of brunch: omelets, strata, frittata, quiche, and crepes. In addition, there are so many variations on each of these that I felt it important to add. I settled on five variations on the five master recipes for these dishes. And, of course, there had to be a chapter on pancakes, waffles, and French toast and sweets—the Bacon French Toast is killer—and a bakery section for everything from muffins to scones and doughnuts, not to mention unique salads such as the Beet and Artichoke Salad, and some interesting "brunch bites" like Crunchy Zucchini Rounds with Roasted Tomatoes and Goat Cheese.

Why sweets? Isn't brunch more about the eggs, muffins and cheeses, meats, and other savory dishes?

Most brunch dishes lend themselves to the traditional Easter meal, but the Passover meal is typically served in the evening. And it is very challenging to find desserts that respect Passover traditions. For example, we cannot use flour, yeast, baking soda, or powder. That eliminates a lot of desserts!

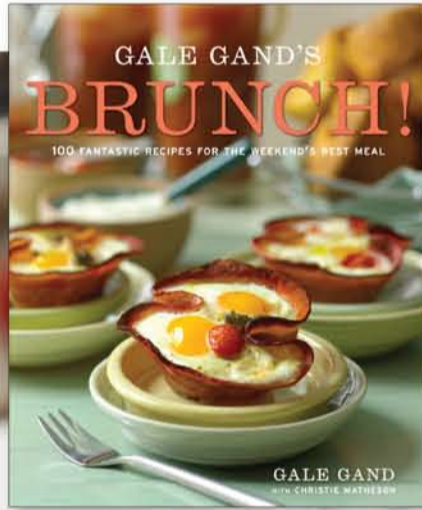
Usually, people end up with the usual dry sponge cake or a groundnut or flourless chocolate cake. I've developed recipes for Macaroons, a tart shell, and a straight easy fast chocolate ganache.

What else is important to you?

Teaching and encouraging people to cook with their children and families. I think it is important for children to feel a part of preparing food for the family. I love to teach, to get people cooking because it gives them a level of skills and confidence that they don't get elsewhere. And it's actually pretty easy!

Gale has a new Web site that includes a calendar of her cooking demonstrations, selected recipes, and links to all of her activities; over the past year, she also taped 26 cooking segments for the Food Channel's *Answer TV* segment that can be accessed via her Web site www.galegand.com. Recently celebrating its 10th anniversary, Tru is located at 676 N. Saint Clair Street in Chicago. For more information, call 312-202-0001, or visit www.truresaurant.com. □

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Broccoli and Ham Strata

Serves 8

5 cups cubed French bread

10 eggs

4 cups milk

1 teaspoon dry mustard

1 teaspoon salt

1/2 cup broccoli florets

1/2 cup cooked and quartered red-skinned potatoes

1/2 cup cubed ham

1/2 cup diced red pepper, sautéed

2 cups grated sharp cheddar cheese

Butter a 9 x 13 baking dish.

Place bread cubes in the dish, then top with the vegetables, ham, and grated cheese. In a bowl, whisk together the eggs, milk, mustard, and salt.

Pour the mixture over the bread cubes.

Fold in slightly to mix in the vegetables and ham.

Cover and chill up to 24 hours to let it soak up the custard.

Uncover the dish and bake at 350 for 60 minutes.

Tent with foil if the dish is browning too quickly. Serve immediately.



A special thanks to Glenn Gutnayer for providing *Sheridan Road* with the phenomenal backdrop for the shoot. The spectacular gourmet kitchen pictured is part of a beautiful French Normandy style, 6-bedroom home in Highland Park.

Seated on a 3/4 acre lot, the house is complete with a three-car garage, hand-carved fireplaces of rare stones, and beautiful bedroom suites. Plus, with its La Cornue oven and custom zinc hood, the kitchen is fit for a chef!

For more information on this home located at 1590 Hawthorne Lane in Highland Park, call 847-432-3529, or visit www.glenngutnayerconstruction.com.