

A group of seven women are seated around a long dining table covered with a vibrant red tablecloth. They are engaged in conversation and holding wine glasses, suggesting a toast. The table is elegantly set with white plates, silverware, and various glasses. Small vases with yellow and orange flowers are placed along the table. A tall, lit candle in a glass holder provides warm lighting. The background shows a home interior with a wooden cabinet, framed artwork, and indoor plants.

# *Dining Women*

A merry group of Cape Cod women gather monthly for good food, good wine and good gossip... all in the name of a good cause.

BY MARLISSA BRIGGETT  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DENNIS COLLIGAN

*Remember Robin Hood's band of a dozen merry men who pledged to help the poor? Now picture them as Cape Cod women... women who love good food and cooking. Welcome to the Ladies' Friday Night Supper Club. It's not a perfect analogy, of course. These women aren't outlaws. They are respected members of their communities, current and retired business people, homemakers, lawyers and even a former legislator. What they share in common with Robin Hood's merry men, however, is a passion for helping the less fortunate and a determination to have fun while doing it.*

The sound of ping pong and children's laughter is in the background at Beverly Cobuzzi's home as a dozen friends convene for their monthly supper club. Ruth Provost, the Executive Director of the Boys & Girls Club of Cape Cod, is in the kitchen wrestling with an enormous striped bass. The aroma of stuffing—butter, onions, celery, scallops and spices—fills the air. The women are dancing around the house, singing loudly, "It's my party and I'll cry if I want to." Except there's obviously no crying taking place tonight—just a whole lot of

happiness, love and friendship at their Ladies' Friday Night Supper Club, which is actually held on Wednesdays but servicing another group of diners on Friday nights.

For 10 years, these women have been meeting monthly to share dinner. Together, they have witnessed momentous life events, both sad and joyful, but one constant during that time has been their monthly supper club. One member humorously measures the impressive passage of time: "10 years....and at least 10 pounds."



#### Dining for Dinners

The Ladies Friday Night Supper Club is not just about their friendship. What makes these dinners special is that the women take the money they would have spent going to a nice restaurant and pool it together to make a generous monthly donation to the Cape Cod Boys and Girls Club. The Boys & Girls Club uses their donations to fund weekly Friday night dinners for children.

Debbie Bates says, "We realized that some of the Club's members were not getting a hot meal from the time they left school on Friday until they returned to school on Monday. It would make your heart bleed. The Friday night suppers were a way to help them through the weekend."

#### 8 Steps for a Successful Supper Club

1. Find 12 people who are interested in gathering for good food, fellowship and a cause they all believe in, such as the Boys and Girls Club or other non-profits in need of donations. The members need not know one another personally but they must be compatible. At least one person should serve as the organizer, the person who makes sure that the venues, dates and food are properly assigned.
2. Pick your first date. It is helpful to hold the dinners on the same night of the week.
3. Choose a theme for the evening. This can be as broad as "seafood" or "Italian."
4. Choose a host home. The homes will rotate throughout the year so that you will never host more than once per year.
5. Members volunteer to bring different components of the meal. For 12 members, the suggested amounts are two appetizers, one entrée, one starch, one vegetable, one salad and one dessert. The host generally does not prepare a dish. Other members who are not assigned something may bring wine.
6. Gather together, eat and have fun.
7. Write a check. The Ladies Friday Night Supper Club originally started at \$25 per person and increased the monthly donation to \$50 per member.
8. Before leaving for the evening, plan the next event.





If it's hard sometimes to remember that there are children on the Cape who are living in poverty, some of the original founding members of the Supper Club will tell you that it became more tangible when they were regularly volunteering at the Boys & Girls Club at its Friday dinners for members. They were shocked by the raw need they witnessed: there were children who squirmed hot dogs away to feed to younger siblings; there was the mother who did not have a refrigerator in which to keep the leftovers they pressed upon her. The women decided the Boys & Girls Club needed to expand the dinners: to make them more nutritious and to open the doors for all members, even those whose families were financially secure, so that the children who really needed the dinners would not feel stigmatized by showing up for them.

But, they wondered how to pay for this expanded vision. Back then, Susan George remembers filling her station wagon up with food she bought herself to supplement the meals then served at the club. "It was amazing to me that I could spend \$150 a month to help feed 80 kids a week," she says.

She and a few other loyal volunteers at the Club

brainstormed together and came up with the idea of a monthly supper club. "Why not get together at each other's homes for dinner?" they thought. They'd throw the money they would have spent at a restaurant into a kitty for the Boys & Girls Club to fund the weekly dinners. There was some poetry in the idea: their dinner gatherings would allow children, some who desperately needed the food, to gather for dinner.

And it worked. On any given week, the dinners feed anywhere from 80 to 150 children. They are a tangible legacy of the fellowship established by the Ladies' Friday Night Suppers Club.

#### A Friendly Feast

Susan has helped to organize the monthly get together from the onset, leading the charge to determine which Wednesday night can include a majority of the women and what their dinner theme for the evening will be: Italian, seafood, etc. Each week, the ladies arrive with their own dishes that combined create a complete meal for the evening. Some of the recipes featured are old family favorites. Some are created especially for the

## Dining Women

dinner club. Brenda Curry-McKeon is passing her Lobster Cakes. They are mashed potatoes flavored with lobster and scallops, topped with a savory sherry whipped cream and a mango aioli. Each lobster cake is delicately presented on a curly leaf of Boston lettuce. There's no question that the meal is worthy of any restaurant.

Ten years is a lot of time and the Supper Club is going stronger than ever. They have shared 100 meals, countless recipes and thousands of jokes. They have met in one another's homes. They have even convened in Florida one winter.

While they'd love to open their doors to other new members, 12 members is the perfect size to keep it manageable. They want to see more dinner clubs set up to benefit other programs at the Boys & Girls Club but each member is loathe to leave her beloved club to start a spin-off. They are willing, however, to lend their considerable expertise to any one who is interested in starting his/her own (see inset), as well as their recipes from this evening's fun-filled dinner (see box).

At the end of the night, the women gather in the kitchen, first for dessert, then to help clean up. The kitchen is lit with industry as they clean up, the 12 women joking and laughing. "Maybe we should do a calendar!" someone suggests and they all explode with laughter. Ruth surveys the scene. "It's too bad we don't have any fun," she says slyly, and then joins in the laughter. 🍷

### Supper Club Recipes

The women of the Ladies' Friday Night Supper Club share their recipes from one special evening, including baked stuff striped bass, lobster cakes and lemon meringue pie. Find these recipes online at [www.capecodmagazine.com](http://www.capecodmagazine.com).