

# A Big Serving Of Southern Fried Goodness

## The story of two women, great food and good deeds

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Yin and yang is the interplay between seemingly opposite or contrary forces that interact to form a whole greater than either separate part.

My definition of yin and yang is Lillian and Leisa Dent and their restaurant LL Dent in Carle Place. Lillian, the mother, the diplomatic host running the front of the house, seeing that the diners are treated properly; Leisa, the daughter and the chef, rambunctious and outspoken, making sure the food comes out of the kitchen as expected. These are two very different people as exemplified by their relationship to butter. Lillian, who grew up on a farm in Evans, Ga., recalls that one of her chores was to milk a cow and churn butter for the family. She says, "I hated the smell of milk and butter and I do not eat any creamy dairy products, including butter." Leisa, however, loves butter so much that when she was four years old she figured out how to open the refrigerator and was discovered sitting in the corner of the kitchen devouring a bar of butter.

Together these two very different women have created a popular restaurant serving good southern-style food. Although Lillian stays out of the kitchen at LL Dent, she cooked at home when her children were growing up, and a lot of the dishes that Leisa creates are from her mother's kitchen. However, says Lillian, Leisa has changed them to healthier versions, such as collard greens, traditionally cooked with ham hocks, are now made with smoked turkey, providing the same depth of flavor with less fat.



One of the most popular dishes on the LL Dent menu is the southern fried chicken, another family dish that Leisa has tweaked. Recently, a friend told me she had taken her son to the restaurant to taste their chicken livers because she felt they represented the southern cooking that she had grown up with. She was pleased to report that her son appreciated the taste.

Grand cakes are a part of southern cooking, and LL Dent offers delicious red velvet, coconut and pound cake.

A good way to sample the LL Dent menu is their brunch (Sundays from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.). There, you'll always find catfish, fried chicken, mac and cheese, okra and tomatoes, black-eyed peas, collard greens, candied yams, potato salad, rice, cornbread, omelets, waffles with strawberries and whipped cream, plus specials.

More about Lillian and Leisa. Since opening the restaurant six years ago, they have become an integral part of the Long Island charitable

community. They bring their food to community fundraising events such as Cooks for Kids. Lillian is on the board of The Women's Fund of Long Island, NAWBO, Rapid Recovery (a program for mentally ill and displaced people) and the Roosevelt Golf Association, teaching girls the basics. Leisa is very encouraging to young

Lillian Dent (l) proudly holds a photo of her daughter, Chef Leisa, at their restaurant, LL Dent, which often hosts fund-raisers and other charitable events. (Photo by Lyn Dobrin)

chefs and participates in career days. The Roosevelt Alumni Association, the Long Island Fund for Women and Operation Get Ahead have honored them.

They have opened their restaurant to groups for fundraising. Early in the life of the restaurant, I had asked the women to help with a fundraiser for the Adelphi N.Y. Statewide Breast Cancer Program. It was a tough time financially, she told me recently, but they had made the commitment and they are people who keep promises.

"When I talked to the women who had had breast cancer," said Lillian, "I was so moved by their stories: I was glad to help. When I do something for someone it is so rewarding."

LL Dent is at 221 Old Country Rd. in Carle Place. The phone number is 516-742-0940, and the website is [www.lldent.com](http://www.lldent.com).

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