

OUTSIDE THE KITCHEN

**Chef:** Bonnie Saran  
**Residence:** Bedford Hills  
**Restaurants:** Little Kabab Station, Little Crepe Street, Little Spice Bazaar, Little Drunken Chef, Mount Kisco; Little Mumbai Market, Pleasantville



**Chef Speak**

“I can open one restaurant after another because I don’t have that fear of losing anything, I’ve already lost the most precious things to me.”

space arose, Little Crepe Street filled it. “There was no crepe place in the area. I’d never had a crepe in my life, but people gave me recipes, and my customer Martha Stewart taught me how to make batter.” Like the others, it was an instant hit. “I like to take chances,” she says. “Maybe because I don’t have kids, I don’t have to be so careful, I don’t have fear. I can open a restaurant closing my eyes, that doesn’t scare me. Something comes to my mind and I go for it. I like a new challenge.”

She faced her biggest one last year, opening the spacious, DJ-caged, pan-ethnic Little Drunken Chef, brainstormed during an alcohol-fueled friends’ dinner in London. I can attest that whoever’s cooking is definitely sober: During a dinner, I gobbled down the

Tibetan dumplings, trio of ceviche and wine-braised chorizo with figs. Saran’s food is tantalizing at all her restaurants, but there’s also her people. “I tell my staff I’m just like one of them; credibility is what’s important,” she states. “Eighty percent of them have been with me from day one.” The staff I encountered during my visits, gracious and attentive, confirmed that. “I teach my kids, if I can do it, you can do it,” she says. “I have managers in their 20s, each running a \$1.5 million business. Age has never defined what’s possible, as long as you have the aptitude, the desire, the fire—you need to have that fire.” And those tenacious, tireless ants.

—Diane Weintraub Pohl

**B**onnie Saran has ants in her pants. As did her father in India. And her mentor here. That somewhat rusty idiom, proclaimed in her softly accented English, is the ethos that has spurred her mini-empire of three restaurants and one food market in Mount Kisco, and a restaurant in Pleasantville, with consultancies in Virginia, Massachusetts, and London.

But so often, that kind of drive is fueled by hardship, and Saran, at 40, has had her share. Her beloved father’s Indian military career moved the family every two years, and when he died in 2001, the 26-year-old Bonnie hoped a plane to New York would outpace her grief. She planned to stay two weeks. Alone and fragile, a kind Indian ex-pat in Connecticut offered her restaurant-management work, and surrogate fatherhood. Her plans changed. Armed with finance and marketing degrees from her Indian university and event-promotion work experience, she operated restaurants at his company for four years. And then he died, too. “He was the most honest man,” she muses, her sadness still palpable. “He had”—here comes that idiom—“ants in his pants. He always told me that ‘if you don’t, you’ll never do anything, that you should do things today, not tomorrow.’ I can open one restaurant after another because I don’t have that fear of losing anything, I’ve already lost the most precious things to me. But I’ve always been able to start over. You can put me on an island and I’ll sell coconuts on the beach; I’ll always manage.”

And has she! Her Little Kabab Station opened in 2011, financed by a property sale in India. Needing pantry space, she opened Spice Bazaar next door and then figured if you’re going to store spices, you might as well sell them. And some simple street food as well. When another neighboring



WHAT THE HECK ARE...

**Kalettes™**



**Description:** No, there’s no connection to The Rockettes, and they’re not an R&B/pop group (that’s The Ronettes); instead, Kalettes are a hybrid of Russian red kale and conventional Brussels sprouts invented by the UK-based vegetable-breeding company Tozer Seeds. A crossing was a seemingly natural fit, as Brussels sprouts and kale are both from the Brassica oleracea species, which includes cabbage, cauliflower, and broccoli. Kalettes look like slender Brussels sprouts with purple stalks and curly green leaves. They were first available in England in 2010; they launched in the US in 2014.

**Flavor Profile:** Kalettes have a subtler flavor than Brussels sprouts, are a bit nutty and were developed with texture in mind, so it would be fitting for sautéing but also for eating raw. The recommended preparations include roasting or blanching.

**Alternately Known As:** BrusselKale, Lollipop Kale, Kale Sprouts, and, in England, Flower Sprouts

**Hybrid vs. Genetically Modified:** Nothing to fear in case you’re wondering, hybrid vegetables and genetically modified veggies are two different things. Genetically modified vegetables have been changed or tampered within their DNA, while hybrid vegetables are created by simply cross-breeding compatible plants. —JBT

SIZZLING...

**Guanciale**  
(pig’s cheek)



HEATING...

**Lardo** (a type of salumi made with cured strips of fatback and herbs)

FIZZLING...

**Pancetta** (Italian bacon made of pork belly meat)