JULY 2012

CUISINE ART
The expanding empire of JEAN-GEORGES

PLUS: Superstar Chefs of the Hamptons

CANNES DO
PEGGY SIEGAL takes on the French Film Fest

MANHATTAN’S SUPER DONORS
Presidential Fund Race Heats Up

“Too much of a good thing can be wonderful.”
— Mae West

Chef and restaurateur Jean-Georges
Hilarity, Nostalgia And Really Good Causes

Spending a party-packed month before summer sets in

"If you're one of the one-in-three married women who say your pet is a better listener than your husband, you talk too much. And I have more bad news for you: Your dog's not listening either; he's waiting for the food to fall out of your mouth." Bill Maher was reading from his book, The NEW New Rules, and it was enough to make my evening at Literacy Partner's 28th Annual "Evening of Readings" Gala. But there was more. Liz Smith was honored, appropriately, with "The LIZZIE Award," for her lifetime of service with Literacy Partners. Sally Bedell Smith, author of Elizabeth the Queen; The Life of a Modern Monarch, and a featured reader, called Liz the Queen of New York, and we all agreed. But she's a Queen without airs. She told us, "Co-Chairs Arnold Scasas and Parker Ladd had to be in Palm Beach, but send their love." Jackie Weld and Alina Cho chichi and passionately held up their end of chairmanship, and welcomed us to the über-glam Jazz at Lincoln Center tiered dining/performance room. LP also honored Kathryn Stockett and Tate Taylor for The Help, and McGraw Hill's Harold McGraw III. Dorecia Diaz and Charlene Harper told us LP helped them move out of the ranks of the over two million New Yorkers who can't read. Then they showed us how to celebrate. Sparkling, literate and generous guests included: Judy and Alfred Taubman, Rod Drake, Peter Brown, Jeff Sharp and Doug Steinbrech, Lisa (Jazz at Lincoln Center's own angel) and David Schiff, Jeffrey Toobin (who also read from his soon-to-be-published book, The Obama White House vs. the Supreme Court), Jamee and Peter Gregory, Annette Tapert Allen, Yanna Avis (do NOT miss her next show at The Metropolitan Room—divine!), Anderson Cooper, Carol Higgins Clark, and more just as smart. Just when I thought nothing could make me smile the way Bill Maher did, one of the most clever and fun nights of the year rolled around: The "Through the Kitchen Party," this year, "Tipping Your Toque" to the 30th anniversary, and a deeper tip to Lauren Veronis, who founded the event. As her daughter, Perri Peltz, told us, "Thirty years ago my mother set out to create a uniquely fun party where humor is everywhere and everyone has an exceptionally good time. It was her vision to invite guests to walk through the kitchen of New York's most exclusive restaurant (The Four Seasons, of course), going where no guest has gone before, or has since. When..."
my mother approached owners Julian and Alex, they thought it couldn't be
done, but my mother can be very persuasive, and the pool has never been
the same since.” Those pool incarnations have included a duck pond,
the Statue of Liberty and a harbor with tugboats, and ultimately
brought in more than $8 million to fund essential scientific research on
the immune system and its power to conquer cancer. This year, crafty
designer Dejuan Stroud brought us a “New York hot spots through the
ages” theme—don’t pretend you don’t remember these places. Lauren’s
table. “The Latin Quarter,” had her regulars—Mayor Bloomberg, Barbara
Walters, Elaine and Ken Langone, Nicole Seligman and Joel Klein and
Lynn Nesbit. I sat with Perri, D.A., Cy Vance, Diane Nabiloff and Bob Ma-
chinist at “Trader Vics”—complete with stringed coconut sets, poised for
embarrassing costuming later. Steve Kroft, Jenny Connant, Tory Burch
and Lyor Cohen and Linda Wells were at the “Studio 54” table, with mirrors
and lines of what I later found out was talcum powder. “The Continental
Baths” table stayed open this time. Ray and Veronica Kelly were there.
Diana Taylor, John Veronis, Lally Weymouth, and Jo Carole and Ronald
Lauder were seated at the “Copacabana” table, and beloved auctioneer
and pal, Jamie Niven had special fun with the “Plato’s Retreat” table—“I happen
to know Plato’s Retreat is very familiar to some of the fellows at that table.
I can out you . . . or you can outbid all others.” Over $900,000 was raised,
and with loosed aprons we went gently into that good Sunday eve.

More good work fighting cancer—though never enough. The American
Cancer Society hosted The Birthday Bash, where Volunteer Chair, Diana
Feldman told us to “blow out candles for a cancer-free world.” This year
Geoffrey Bradfield and Nate Berkus, two men with exceptional talent and
generosity, were honored. Geoffrey, who传感 me to New York “from a rural farm
in South Africa 30 years ago,” (must’ve been the chicest farm on the vet),
was honored at two other events this week—earlier with the Hyland Magazine
Award for Design Excellence, and later, for the publication of his book—A
21st Century Palace (which was preceded by the recent publication of Ex
Arte—phew), His pal, author Barbara Taylor Bradford, presented his award,
and said, “Three minutes is not enough—I’m writing a book!” Nate Berkus’
great friend, Lisa Kogan, a cancer survivor, told us, “What doesn’t kill you
makes you stronger, took me eight years to apply but I’m here for Nate, in
Spanx and heels, on a humid night.” The loving crowd, including Gigi and
Harry Benson, Martine Assouline, Charlotte Ford, Di Mondo
and Eric Javits and Heather Cohane bid up a storm, then packed
up pieces of the Magnolia Cupcake centerpiece and headed home,
thinking how lucky we are to be healthy, to know Geoffrey and Nate,
and to have a cupcake to go.

My last and one of my favorite lunches before summer seizes us is
The Fountain House Symposium and Luncheon—a special moment to
listen, learn and help someone with some form of mental illness—we all
know at least one. The Pierre rafters swelled to accommodate the 500
supporters who raised over $1 million dollars. For me, most affecting
are the panelists who often found their professions through personal
affiction. Dr. Elyn Saks told us that her battle with bipolar disease has made
her realize, “My mind is my best friend . . . and worst enemy.” And after 18
adult years without a date, she experienced her first kiss and thought, “This
is better than having an article accepted.” She married him, and while always
vigilant, enjoys a productive life. Dr. Mark vonnegut, winner of the 2012
Humanitarian Award, told us his wife first diagnosed his bi-polar condition, by
saying, “Not all of your ideas are good.” Lorna Graef, Board Chair, has driven
this issue and this remarkable organization, and it pulses with friends’ pride in
her vital work. Those included: Frances Beatty Adler, Bill Bartholomay, Susan
Warner, Averil Meyer, Marianna Kaufman and Kitty McKnight.

Stay healthy, happy and cool.