

S IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY

JACKIE (ROSENBLATT) BLANKEN '98

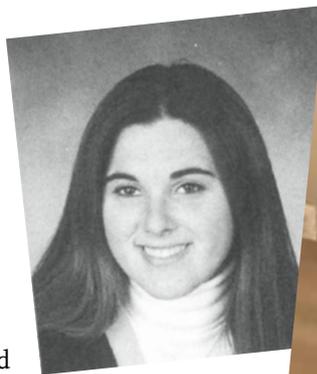
"I had never seen a teacher with as much passion for writing or a particular book as Mr. Mike Hibbs, my Upper School English teacher at Bullis," recalls Jackie (Rosenblatt) Blanken '98. "The passion he exuded was almost palpable and so inspiring—I found myself on the edge of my seat each day in class, and aspired to find a career that I was just as passionate about. I was an English major in college largely because of Mr. Hibbs' class," she says. Following graduation from Indiana University in 2002, Jackie began writing grants for a nonprofit organization, but soon enough realized that it was not the right fit. She could not have imagined then that her eventual career would stem from a childhood love of cooking and baking.

Jackie had fond memories of making such things as steak au poivre, fresh challah and donuts as a young child with her father and other family members, so she decided to make a career shift and attend culinary school at L'Academie de Cuisine. She graduated with honors from the one year program in 2005 and completed her externship at Black Market Bistro in Garrett Park, Maryland. "That was particularly inspiring because the kitchen staff was predominantly female, which is unusual. My female colleagues were calm but strong

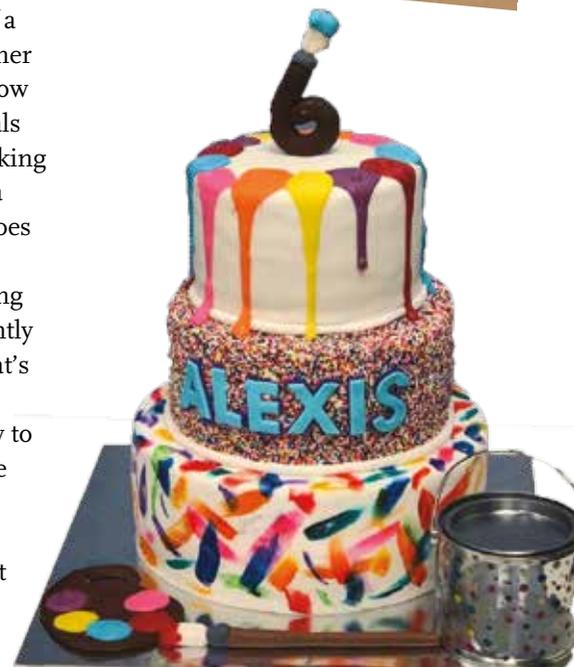
forces, always helpful and supportive of each other." This positive experience clarified Jackie's decision to become a professional chef and eventually have her own business.

In 2006, Jackie helped open Bezu, a French-Asian-inspired fine dining restaurant in Potomac Village, as both the sous chef and the pastry chef. "It was a huge challenge for me," she says, "wearing two significant hats, changing my mindset and my food from 'bistro' to more 'fine dining' and learning to work as part of a different team. Working in a kitchen is a lot like a symphony, where every instrument and person needs to work together, otherwise the whole order crashes. You need to be able to communicate, focus, and rely on the other cooks in your kitchen." Grateful for her experience and growth at Bezu both personally and professionally, Jackie knew her best fit would ultimately be on her own terms.

Jackie's entrepreneurial spirit led her to open her own catering business in 2008. Catering by Jackie focuses on parties, platter service, desserts and confectionaries and allows her to tackle all aspects of the business from food to financials. Her kitchen is constantly bustling with fondant for a specialty



birthday cake or the smell of a savory dish for a holiday dinner with her family. While she now pursues her professional goals on her own, it's still like working with a symphony. "There is a great deal of planning that goes into everything I make; the order and timing of everything is crucial. I have to be diligently organized with each item that's created, but because I love what I do, I am always happy to put in the extra effort," Jackie says. If you are interested in learning more or placing an order, please contact Jackie at jackieblanken@gmail.com.



At top, Jackie's senior portrait from the 1998 edition of *Roll Call*; Jackie proudly displays a cake she created for a recent crab feast party; above, a colorful three-tier cake Jackie constructed for an art-themed birthday party.