



**Armed for business.** Marybeth Boller found that feedback from satisfied customers became her best marketing tool.

Manhattan's culinary epicenter, and a Connecticut home base near her family. After a few dead ends, she came across an 11-year-old catering business housed in a sunny, spacious building in Greenwich, Connecticut, and knew it was the right choice. She made the purchase, and Marybeth's Catering was officially born.

Boller was excited to get started. "With my own company, I could really put my skills into practice," she explained. As a new entrepreneur, it was also important that she tap into her business background. She earned a business and marketing degree from Providence College, with the early foresight that it would help support her culinary career.

One of the most crucial steps to developing her business was securing a customer base. The company she purchased had a built-in client roster, but Boller's style of cuisine differed from the previous owner's. "There were no guarantees," she notes. She

called on loyal followers from her past, and utilized newspaper and magazine advertising. Feedback from her satisfied customers became her best marketing tool. "The business has primarily grown through word of mouth," she says.

As news spread, her next task was hiring experienced staff so she could handle business expansion. With high standards of quality and a specific company vision, it wasn't always easy finding people who she felt were the right fit. One by one, she built a team by recruiting a mix of former colleagues and local talent.

Marybeth's Catering ended its most recent year with a sales increase of 15 percent. Boller caters events ranging from private dinners for ten to weddings to major business occasions—including a Marc Jacobs fashion show after-party and a 1,500-person reception for the Premiere of Cirque du Soleil Corteo.

Boller has found that life as an entrepreneur suits her well. "I love the flexibility" she says, "and it's always interesting. Every event is something new, something different." Looking to the future, she's considering adding take-out options to her business and expanding her geographic reach. She can picture a Marybeth's Catering location on Martha's Vineyard, and previewed the area by spending several weeks in August working for a private client there. With these kinds of possibilities, Boller says, "I can't see myself doing anything else." \$\$\$

## Taste of Success

Turning a passion for fine food into a thriving entrepreneurial business.

BY MELANIE SCHUTT

**After achieving her childhood dream** of becoming a successful chef, Marybeth Boller reached a turning point in her career. She'd spent 16 years rising through the ranks of top restaurants and catering companies in the U.S. and Europe, but found herself asking, "What's next?" She answered this question three years ago, when she made the decision to launch her own catering enterprise.

Boller had been content working for other establishments, but innate ambition propelled her to venture out on her own. "I'm grateful for my past experience. I just felt I'd gone as far as I could go," she says. To take her career to the next level, she began exploring the idea of forming a business. Her goal was to bring the fine dining experience of a four-star restaurant to catered events.

While researching her options, Boller realized that buying an existing company made more sense than starting from scratch. She sought a location with convenient access to