

# Miss Ella Brennan: The Grand Dame of New Orleans Cuisine and Commander's Palace

The city of New Orleans has lost one of its most cherished and influential figures with the passing of Miss Ella Brennan. As the matriarch of the Brennan family, the founder of Commander's Palace, and a culinary legend in her own right, Miss Ella played a pivotal role in shaping the city's rich culinary heritage.



## Miss Ella of Commander's Palace by Harlan Hubbard

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5

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## Early Life and Culinary Roots

Ella Brennan was born on September 23, 1925, into a prominent and well-connected family in New Orleans. Her father, Owen Brennan, Sr., was a successful businessman and politician, while her mother, Margaret Martin Brennan, was a renowned hostess and philanthropist. Ella grew up surrounded by the vibrant culinary culture of her hometown, where food and hospitality were essential elements of daily life.

From a young age, Ella displayed a keen interest in cooking and entertaining. She spent hours in the kitchen with her mother, learning the secrets of Creole and Cajun cuisine. Ella also developed a passion for hosting gatherings, bringing together family and friends to share delicious meals and lively conversation.

## **The Birth of Commander's Palace**

In 1960, Ella and her brother Owen Brennan, Jr. opened Commander's Palace, a modest restaurant located in the historic Garden District of New Orleans. With Ella's culinary expertise and Owen's business acumen, the restaurant quickly gained a reputation for its exceptional cuisine and warm, welcoming atmosphere.

Commander's Palace became a culinary destination, attracting both locals and tourists alike. Ella's innovative menu, which blended traditional Creole and Cajun dishes with modern culinary techniques, earned her critical acclaim and numerous awards, including the prestigious James Beard Award for Best Chef: Southwest in 1991.

## **A Culinary Dynasty**

Under Ella's leadership, Commander's Palace became the cornerstone of the Brennan family's restaurant empire. The Brennan family opened several other successful restaurants in New Orleans, including Brennan's, Dickie Brennan's Steakhouse, and Tableau, each with its own unique culinary identity but sharing the same commitment to excellence.

Ella's children and grandchildren have followed in her footsteps, continuing the Brennan family's legacy in the hospitality industry. Her daughter, Ti Martin, is the proprietor of the renowned restaurant Pêche Seafood Grill,

while her grandson, Brennan Boesch, is the chef and owner of the acclaimed restaurant August. Ella's great-grandchildren are also involved in the family business, ensuring that the Brennan family's culinary legacy will continue for generations to come.

## **A Pioneer in the Hospitality Industry**

Beyond her culinary accomplishments, Ella Brennan was also a pioneer in the hospitality industry. She was one of the first women to achieve success as a chef and restaurateur, breaking down barriers and inspiring countless others to pursue careers in the culinary arts.

Ella was also a tireless advocate for New Orleans and its culinary culture. She served on the board of directors of the New Orleans Tourism Commission and the Louisiana Restaurant Association, and she was instrumental in promoting the city's unique culinary heritage to the world.

## **A Legacy of Excellence and Generosity**

Miss Ella Brennan's legacy extends far beyond her culinary achievements. She was a respected businesswoman, a philanthropist, and a role model for women in the industry. Her passion for food, her unwavering commitment to excellence, and her generous spirit have left an indelible mark on New Orleans and the world of gastronomy.

In 2013, Miss Ella Brennan was inducted into the Louisiana Hospitality Hall of Fame, a testament to her exceptional contributions to the industry. She also received numerous other awards and accolades throughout her career, including the National Restaurant Association's Humanitarian Award in 2009 and the James Beard Lifetime Achievement Award in 2017.

## A Culinary Matriarch Remembered

Miss Ella Brennan passed away on December 31, 2018, at the age of 92. She is survived by her children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and countless friends and admirers.

Ella Brennan will be remembered as one of the most influential figures in the culinary history of New Orleans. Her contributions to the city's cuisine, her role as a pioneer in the hospitality industry, and her unwavering commitment to excellence have left a lasting legacy that will continue to inspire future generations.



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