



Collette Peters, queen of the cake.

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# TOP 10 WOMEN COOKS OF 1996



Susan Spicer works culinary magic in the French Quarter.

**D**id anyone ever tell you that your butterscotch-pecan brownies are bankable? Do dinner guests ask you to jot down your recipes or ask, only half jokingly, you to cater their next party? And have you ever day-dreamed about running a restaurant or pastry shop of your own?

It was just such stirrings that sparked the ten women we honor here. They are food professionals operating in very different areas of the business, each accommodating her own personality, psyche, aptitudes, and interests with the variety of opportunities in this field.

One writes cookbooks, while another teaches cooking to an expanded TV classroom. There is a full-time, specialized caterer and a proprietor of an enticing take-out food shop. A nature lover who adores country life and food learned to produce pungent goat cheeses. A painter who always liked to bake decorates fantasy cakes for special occasions only, while the owner of a pastry shop and lunch café whips up the whole gamut of pies, cakes, cookies, and muffins daily. Even our three chefs have vastly different scopes and pressures: one does her own, very personal thing in a romantic antique cottage; another makes sure chefs do her thing as she oversees the kitchens of nine trendy restaurants in which she is a corporate partner; the third is a toque-topped chef de cuisine in a posh hotel.

*New Woman* celebrates not only the achievements of these talented and dedicated women, but the social changes that have made their successes possible. For though the task of cooking has been automatically assigned to women as mothers and wives or in school cafeterias or in casual mom-and-pop restaurants, until some 15 years ago very few were full-fledged chefs (leaders of kitchen staffs), and you could count entrepreneurs such as Mrs. Fields and Alice Waters on the fingers of one hand. Not only was