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**LISA SCHROEDER**

Mother's Bistro & Bar | Portland, Oregon

Lisa Schroeder is living proof that it is never too late to change the course of your career path to arrive at the destination of your dreams. A young mother at the age of 21, she earned her college degree while working as a telemarketer, doing catering on the side, and raising her daughter. "I was always planning to go to law school," Lisa says, "but I found myself either cooking or reading, talking, or thinking about food all the time!"

One evening in 1992, after a thirteen-hour day at work as a products and licensing manager for Weight Watchers International, Lisa debated what to pick up to serve her family for dinner. "I realized that there were plenty of places to get pizza or Chinese, Mexican, and Thai food, but no place to get 'mother food'—the kind a mom would make if only she had the time," she recalls. "I also realized that I could not spend the rest of my life working at a job I didn't love. It was at that moment I decided to pursue my dream of opening a restaurant."

At age 35, thousands of dollars in debt and with just \$100 to her name, Lisa enrolled in culinary school and was awarded scholarship money. She later worked in four-star restaurants in New York and France, and then in January 2000 opened Portland, Oregon-based Mother's Bistro & Bar, which has forty employees. "We serve home cooking from mothers around the world, each month featuring the cuisine of a different woman," the executive chef explains. "We tell her story and offer a menu with five or six of her special dishes, along with her picture."

The restaurant is known for such comfort-food favorites as pot roast, chicken and dumplings, meatloaf, and a different macaroni and cheese recipe each day. "I like to say it's like mother's cooking, only better," Lisa laughs.

