

Opening Remarks

Eat, Drink and Be Savvy: The Food and Beverage Beat

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NEWSDAY - Erica Marcus, Food Reporter

Thank you for inviting me today. I actually found publicist extremely useful when I first came to Newsday and didn't know anything about the food scene, so thank you.

I have a couple of apologies to proffer, I didn't bring any cards with me because I was at home yesterday for Passover, so sorry. But I think you all know how to get in touch with me, it's Erica.Marcus@newsday.com. And I'm also sorry if I haven't responded to phone calls and emails, we're all sort of inundated with them. It's not personal, I do try to respond.

I also wanted to start off with a little bit of a news flash we have a new food editor at Newsday who is Marjorie Robins. Marjorie was our travel editor, she's our food editor she's really great I think you'll all really like her. She says "Hello" and you can email her at food@newsday.com. Kari Granville, our food editor, is now going to be our travel editor, so if any of you have travel accounts you can email her at travel@newsday.com, and she is also editing a new New York City real estate section.

If you are confused about whether Newsday is a Long Island paper or a New York paper or both, so am I. I've been working there for six years I still haven't figured it out. We are definitely pushing our City Edition. The office is based in Queens but we do a lot of New York City news and I'm going to try to make it clear to you what we do and what we don't do but it's constantly in motion. So if you're in doubt just call me and we may just tell you, "I'm sorry that is just too New York for us." But we may not, it really changes every week. We don't do too many stories that are just on New York if there's no Long Island or Queens connection, however we would have done a big story on Per Se if Thomas Keller's people had let us. We did a lot about Rocco, it helped that he's originally from Queens. I did a hot chocolate piece a couple of months ago where I covered places in Queens, Nassau and Suffolk and depending on the edition we ran them in a different order. Newsday still doesn't have diplomatic relations with Brooklyn, which is a problem because I live in Brooklyn, but I'm there pushing for us to do more stuff on Brooklyn. Again, the best thing to do if you're confused is just to check with me. Our food section is on Wednesday, you can see it today we have a new design that most of our readers don't like. I hope you feel differently, I really like it. The Wednesday section is based around a big cover story which is about a trend or a profile or a holiday or in today's case about marshmallow peeps. These tend to be staff written, we very rarely have freelance or wire on the cover. Inside we usually have a B-story which is smaller in scope and might not be written by a staff person.

We also have our "Pot Luck" page where we used to feature four new products, now we feature three, you guys are probably aware of that. If you want to pitch something to us for "Pot Luck" you can either send it to me or Sylvia Carter or to Herbie Wheeler. If you have a sense of which one of us might like it better, we all contribute. It has to be available on Long Island or online, and if it's only available online it can't cost \$3 because my readers are not going to pay \$2.50 shipping to get a \$3 product.

We have to test it before we're going to put it in the paper so we need a couple of weeks.

Our deadlines are really elastic. I'd hate to tell you how close to the wire we sometimes

work, but if you're doing something for Easter or any holiday, we are having to choose from a lot of products. So sending it two months in advance would be fine, any more than that and we just haven't gotten our head around that future holiday so it might not be best for you.

We love it when you send pictures, but what's best is when you tell us that you have pictures that you can send us because most of us don't like to get enormous jpeg's when we're unaware. So tell us that you have pictures. Or if you don't have pictures we'll probably need one product to test and then a whole product to shoot.

Sylvia Carter has a column every week called "A La Carter" and I sometimes refer publicity people to her because sometimes they'll pitch a story to me which I think is really fascinating but it doesn't have the comprehensive scope that I need because I don't have a column, I generally write cover stories. So Sylvia, if something catches her fancy, can do a marvelous job on it.

Anything that you have for a calendar, upcoming events, you should send to Herbie Wheeler. We have different people write the calendar for our New York edition and for our Long Island edition but it all goes through Herbie, so any upcoming event let Herbie know.

We don't do a lot of liquor and we do a little bit of wine. We have a wine columnist who we buy from the Washington Post so nothing you send us is going to get in there.

However, Peter Gianotti, who is our fine dining critic on Sunday, will write about wine occasionally. Obviously, we try to do a lot on Long Island wine. And Alan Wax, who is one of our business writers, also writes about wine. So those are really the best people to contact about wine.

On Friday we also have food, we have a sort of less expensive review called the "Eats" review, which is written by Joan Reminick on Long Island and the Queens reviews are either done by Rose Kim or Sylvia Carter. Rose is a freelancer. They're very responsive to hearing about new places, obviously they really want to know what's new so let them know about new restaurants.

We also occasionally have a feature called "City Bites" which is a short review of a New York City restaurant which is done by any number of people in the food department.

That's where we might review a new New York City restaurant. We maybe do 25 a year and we try to pick places that people on Long Island will find useful, places in the Theater District or new, splashy places. You might pitch for that. Obviously we go anonymously. We pay so it doesn't really help to invite us to a place because if we're invited to a place and they know us we can't review it.

On Sunday we have our "Fine Dining Review" that Peter Gianotti does. That tends to be, except in very rare cases, a Long Island or Queens restaurant.

I made a list of some of my pet peeves. The first one would have to be people who pitch me who aren't reading *Newsday*. It's just a waste of everybody's time if you're pitching me the kinds of stories we've never done and we're never going to do, so please at least just flip through it.

Another thing is that I often get frustrated when I have publicists who very much want me to write about their product but don't care if my readers can get their product. The last thing I want is to tell my readers about something and when they go to the store it's not there. That makes them upset with me and that makes them upset with your client, so that's one thing that I've gotten angry at. You really need to know where on Long Island

these products are available, because we get angry calls.

Don't send gigantic emails filled with pictures and even more confusing to me are emails with enormous attachments that just basically have text that could have been in the regular old email. I love elaborate, colorful documents, but that's why God made mail.

So feel free to send me pretty things in the mail.

If you're sending samples of food especially if they're perishable please warn me that they're coming because we all have sort of, very inconstant schedules and we might not be there while the clam chowder is rotting.

Don't send really extravagant gifts, they just make us feel really uncomfortable. We like to think that we're going to cover your product because we think it's a good product and if you're sending us flowers and all sorts of stuff... There have been products that we have shied away from featuring that we really, really liked just because we couldn't stand all the gifts. And also stupid gifts like empty wine bottles.

This is a special request from Herbie Wheeler: please put a date on your releases so that when we're going through the pile on our desk we can tell what's the oldest and the newest. Another thing that Herbie asked me to tell you is that we really like feedback.

Sometimes we just feel like we're writing into a void. If we featured your product and you actually got a good response, let us know. You don't have to do this every time, we don't need that, but it's nice to know when we featured your event and people called and made reservations it helps us to know what our readers are interested in.

Don't ever ask us where you can get *Newsday*. I always have people ask me, "Where can I get *Newsday*?" and I say, "The newsstand."

And that's about it. I'll take your questions a little later. Thank you.