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Feminine Firepower:  
Working nine to five (they wish!), women dynamos  
of the Kennebunks keep an ambitious pace

by Valerie Marier

Is is the salty air or is there something extra-special in the brisk ocean water?

Look around — or walk into any local shop or restaurant. Undoubtedly you'll see what American blues musician Keb' Mo' calls "a woman in charge." Fact is, more than 75 businesses throughout the Kennebunks are owned or managed by women, including three NEW establishments just this season.

These newcomers join an impressive list of feminine firepower, including Kate Nelligan, Louise Hurlbutt, Tina Gordon, Ashley Padget, Lani Dietz, Deb Lennon and *Tourist & Town's* editor-publisher Kingsley Gallup, among numerous others. Here is Part One of our salute to

these local businesswomen; Part Two will appear in our July 3 edition.

**NEST by Kristen Weiss: "Live Fully, Entertain Joyfully"**

"I'm an interior stylist who believes that great design isn't about how much you spend," says Kristen Weiss, owner of NEST in Kennebunk. "It's about how a space makes you feel. I want you to love where you live and to make home feel more like you — stylish, welcoming and effortlessly pulled together."

Specifically and thoughtfully, Kristen suggests solutions on rearranging a living room for a refreshed and more comfortable look while still incorporating a treasured vintage sideboard or family-heirloom oriental rug. She inspires clients



NEST owner Kristen Weiss works with homeowners to create more functional and welcoming spaces, and also taps her knowledge and experience of entertaining to help hostesses feel more confident and assured. "I offer advice and tips, whether it's an intimate dinner party of six or an open-house reception."

to "update and elevate" their bedrooms with new coverlet and pillows, perhaps even repainting or wallpapering in crisp 2025 colors. For significantly larger renovations, Kristen consults her reliable list of "trusted local contractors who take pride in their work," then orchestrates the project with finesse, reliability and "a careful, budget-trained eye on spending."

But whether it's a quick-fix or a multi-faceted six-month project, Kristen's advice is always gently laced with "truth serum."

She admits, "I pride myself on developing a respectful relationship with clients, understanding and listening to what they need and want, then suggesting updates for a comfortable and revived effect."

Even while raising a family of "three beautiful children" while simultaneously pursuing a successful corporate career as a sales executive in Boston, Kristen's side passion involved helping friends with her creative eye for details and spaces.

*continued on next page*



Wine House on Main. Photo by Bob Dennis



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"But when my husband and I became empty-nesters last year, we decided to move from Massachusetts to the Kennebunk cottage we had purchased in 2013, and now live here full time," she says.

"I opened NEST late last summer, and immediately dropped off my business card and pamphlet at local businesses, joined the Chamber of Commerce and started advertising on Instagram," she said. It worked! She's currently managing projects from Kennebunk to Portland. (Notably, a Portland realtor asked Kristen to stage one of her properties. The realtor told Kristen that was a "game changer" because she received three

immediate offers.) In addition to helping clients in Brookline, Massachusetts and Falmouth on Cape Cod, Kristen happily meets locals in their homes or over coffee at a local bistro. A multitasker to the core, Kristen additionally offers savvy tips and advice on "gracious and effortless home entertaining. I learned so much from my mother, a consummate hostess and the best role model I could ever ask for," she says.

Whether it's an intimate dinner party for six or an at-home celebration for the extended family, Kristen suggests drink and menu options, flower and table decoration selections, plus fun ambiance for al fresco parties. She

says, "I have an innate sense of how to create meaningful gatherings that encompass unpretentious style on a budget."

Kristen has happily returned to the town where she met her husband 34 years ago. "We had summer jobs at the Colony Hotel in Kennebunkport," she says. "I was a waitress and Chris was a bellman. That one summer changed the trajectory of our lives. We even got married at the Colony in 1996. Today we enjoy living in this beautiful seaside community where the spirit of kindness surrounds us."

*Kristen Weiss offers complimentary 30-minute consultations for potential clients; then, \$100 an hour or a customizable set rate based on scope of project or scale of event. To contact Kristen, call 781-864-0894; email nestbykristenweiss@gmail.com or visit www.nestbykristenweiss.com.*

**Betsy Ross: The Wine House on Main**

"It's not only what's in the glass, it's what's around it," states Betsy Ross, owner of the Wine House on Main, Kennebunk. "I want this to be a place where our wonderful community connects, learns, laughs and feels right at home."

Tapping 30 years' experience in the hospitality business and bolstered by certification from the prestigious Court of Master Sommeliers, Betsy recently expanded her original mission as a wine merchant by a top-to-

bottom overhaul of her cozy establishment. (Coincidentally, after meeting Kristen Weiss of Nest at a local business gathering, she asked Kristen's help in redesigning and updating the Wine House.)

"I bought the property in 2021, primarily as a retail wine store," she says. "But over the last three years, I kept thinking about what I really wanted this to be. I listened to my customers' requests and considered what the community needs. The result is a completely new wine bar and updated retail shop."

Betsy's credentials are as "balanced" and "perfectly blended" as the vintage wine she offers customers. To wit: a biology degree from UMass Amherst bolsters her knowledge of geology, plant science and chemistry, the foundations of wine.

Spending seven years in San Francisco, the "Culinary Capital of the United States," provided a hands-on oenophilic education. Then, stints with the noted Restaurant Associates in New York City and serving as beverage director for Saks Fifth Avenue's L'Avenue, an upscale French eatery specializing in haute cuisine, solidified her knowledge and experience while simultaneously accelerating her ambition.

Trips to Portugal, Tuscany, southern Italy and the northern Rhone Valley of France enriched her "nose for wine" and she is proud of her selections.



Betsy Ross, owner of Wine House on Main. Photo by Bob Dennis

"One of our top wines is Fossacolle Riesci Super Tuscan from Italy that sells for \$45.99. Our best value wine — and it's quite popular — is Casa Santos Lima, a delicious red blend from Portugal which retails for only \$10.99. But because we're a small retail shop, most of our inventory is quite reasonable."

Recently, Betsy instituted a monthly wine club that now boasts more than 50 subscribers, a mix of new and long-time residents aging from their early 30s to recently retired. On the first Tuesday of each month between 4:30 and 6:30, members arrive to pick up their wine (two bottles for \$45, three for \$75, four for \$115). The gathering features a complimentary "reserve" wine tasting plus cheese and charcuterie provided by Kathy Oberman, a classically trained chef and former food stylist for Martha Stewart.

With a new entry trellis

and spiffy paved walkway, plus a side garden patio for sipping vino al fresco, the Wine House on Main is eye-catching and inviting. Betsy admits that her mantra is "community over consumption. I truly look forward to welcoming residents and visitors to come in, relax with a glass of wine and enjoy the comfortable ambiance."

*The Wine House on Main is located at 17 Main Street, Kennebunk; open Wednesdays-Saturdays, 12-8 p.m.; FMI call 207-247-3462 or visit www.winehousemaine.com or @winehousemaine.*

*So let the ladies  
Do what they were  
born to do;  
Raise the vibration,  
And make a better  
place for me and you!*

~"Put a Woman in Charge" by Keb' Mo'



Kristen Weiss (left) and Betsy Ross (right) spent several months redesigning and decorating the Wine House on Main. Kristen says, "We're both members of the Chamber of Commerce. When we met at a meeting, Betsy told me what she was wanted to do, and it just worked. I love this 'local collaboration' and believe it's one of the reasons there are so many dynamo women running and owning businesses. We help each other."

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