

saratoga living

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Ahead of a busy winter events schedule, the producers of CulinaryArts@SPAC—Kim Klopstock and Pam Abrams—sit down with SPAC President Elizabeth Sobol.

Saratoga Living: SPAC's CulinaryArts has become a regular series in record time, with tickets to every event selling out fast. When did this happen—and why?

Elizabeth Sobol: We started CulinaryArts@SPAC at our 2019 Wine and Food Festival. It was a chance to work with Kim Klopstock of Lily and the Rose, who brought along her farm-to-table

ethos. I loved that she produced a dinner that featured the talents of both local and visiting chefs.

Kim Klopstock: I was heartened that SPAC recognized culinary creativity as an artistic pursuit.

ES: We did! And it got us thinking that our audience was hungry for food and drink experiences where they could gather in a beautiful space to learn and taste. Pam Abrams, a food writer in Saratoga, joined our team and we began programming year-round events.

Pam Abrams: Great timing—we ran right into Covid! We did our first two dinners outside under the open-sided pavilion on the SPAC grounds. People were so happy to be able to gather at all that it made us really think about the series as a community service.

ES: As soon as it was safe to open back up, we kicked CulinaryArts@SPAC into high gear and now produce 8-10 events a year.

SL: I heard your Mushroom Experience dinner last November sold out quickly.

PA: It did—we knew mushrooms were hot, but it surprised us just how much that event resonated. It's now one of the models we love: giving the "stage" to local creatives who can bring their expertise to SPAC.

ES: We're going into our fourth year now and we've established a few formats that work well. Like Pam said, one is where we showcase local culinary talent at SPAC. We've had Mike and Shelley Spain from Seneca, Mark Graham from Hattie's, Hayley Stevens from Saratoga Tea and Honey, and others.

KK: Those are usually sit-down, multi-course meals, where the chefs get the chance to create a pop-up and shine.

PA: The other popular format is a book talk where the author of a new cookbook or culinary deep-dive sits down for a conversation about their work while Kim and her team cook a handful of dishes from the book.

SL: What's coming next?

ES: This spring we'll be featuring pintxos—tapas from Spain's Basque region. We're so heartened by the enthusiasm our community has shown for the culinary arts.