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Hands On Gourmet

Retreats with Anne McCarten-Gibbs' company work just as well as a ropes course, but they're much, much tastier.

By Allison Knab (Biology '97)
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Far from the hallowed halls of O-Hill, Anne McCarten-Gibbs (Foreign Affairs '84) is dishing out food of an entirely different sort: salmon tartare, porcini-crusted rib eye and almond cakes are just some of the dishes of [Hands On Gourmet](#), the San Francisco-based business that she helped found. Through the company's cooking sessions, everyone from birthday parties to bridal showers to corporate groups can bond while learning to cook.



McCarten-Gibbs (Foreign Affairs '84)
Photo by James Hall.

Hands On Gourmet is a family affair: McCarten-Gibbs founded it with her brother, Stephen Gibbs, and his partner, Molly Fuller. "I had been involved with my brother's cooking and had been following his career — he's a really great cook and very entertaining," McCarten-Gibbs says. "Why put such a people person back behind kitchen doors?" They had their first client in October 2004 — since then, participants have included groups from Wells Fargo, IBM, Netflix and Gourmet magazine.

Today, McCarten-Gibbs can't believe how much the company has grown. This year they received a national award from [Make Mine a \\$Million](#), a program that helps women-owned businesses surpass the million-dollar revenue mark. Sponsored by American Express Open, the company's small-business segment, and the non-profit microlender [Count Me In for Women's Economic Independence](#), the prize offers mentoring, opportunity for financing and public relations help.

For McCarten-Gibbs, the job's benefits have been exceptionally rewarding. "It's a particularly cool thing because it's a family business," she says. And even though she's not the one in the kitchen, "my cooking has improved tremendously — you can't help but kind of absorb it." The group works with about 25 chefs throughout the Bay Area, with a focus on seasonal, local ingredients from area farmers' markets and seafood fresh off the boat.

McCarten-Gibbs came to Hands On Gourmet from [Youth Philanthropy Worldwide](#), a nonprofit she founded in 2001 while working at the [Global Fund for Women](#). "It all started with wanting to do something for 'Take our Daughters to Work Day,'" she says.

she says. She and a Global Fund for Women board member, Esther Hewlett, wanted to do something bigger than the day's name. They organized a one-day program for underserved youth in East Palo Alto and took them through the process of reviewing grants and evaluating their merit. "The girls who participated really loved this," recalls McCarten-Gibbs. "We said, 'we could do this some more.'" She and Hewlett did it on a volunteer basis for a time before founding Youth Philanthropy Worldwide.

The goal of the nonprofit is to get "American young people aware and engaged and involved in what's happening in the developing world," says McCarten-Gibbs. Youth interested in addressing one of the [United Nations Millennium Development Goals](#) — such as ensuring environmental sustainability and eradicating extreme poverty — can get the support and know-how they need to get started through Youth Philanthropy Worldwide. One of McCarten-Gibbs' favorite projects came from two high school girls who held events to raise awareness about the human rights crisis in Darfur, Sudan. Funds raised from the sale of green ribbons were used to supply livestock to refugee families, giving them a chance to restart their livelihood. Other projects have included raising money for schools in Mexico, starting a pen pal program with an organization in Africa working with children affected by AIDS and gathering funding for a mobile library for street children in India. McCarten-Gibbs remains a board member of the organization.

The roots of McCarten-Gibbs' inspiration began in part at the University of Virginia, where she studied foreign affairs and volunteered with the [National Organization for Women](#). After graduation she volunteered in Zambia with the [International YMCA](#) before heading to graduate school at Princeton University's public policy school. She and her husband, Kevan McCarten-Gibbs (Psychology '81), moved to the Bay Area in 1994 for him to complete his training as an emergency room pediatrician.

Although the two ventures she helped found are very different, McCarten-Gibbs believes they have a common premise. "The theme of my career has been loving to start new things," she says. "Even though they seem very different they're full of love for me; one is working with family and one is working on issues I really care about."

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