

A full-length portrait of Mica England, a woman with long, wavy brown hair, wearing a black short-sleeved chef's jacket. She is standing in front of a large window with a red frame. The window has the word "Breakfast" written on it in a stylized font. The background shows a red wooden structure and a view of greenery outside.

Mica England

She's the owner and chef at Blvd Cafe, a breakfast and lunch eatery in the Rosemary District. Mica's previous career was cheffing for a host of celebrities and wealthy clientele that took her to places like the Hamptons, Jamaica, Fisher Island, Anguilla, Nantucket, St. Barts and New York City. Before that she was an executive chef in New York City and Dallas.

Prior to Mica's career as a chef she wanted to be in law enforcement, but it didn't go as planned as she faced harassment and discrimination - until she got mad and got active and ultimately won a landmark case.



actually met her food and her restaurant first...but this isn't a restaurant review, though I'll say that it was a delicious meal enjoyed al fresco in the Rosemary District. Little did I know that the woman doing it all behind the

counter and who owns the restaurant Blvd Cafe, has previously worked for numerous celebrities acting as their personal chef.

Discretion keeps her from naming some names, but she's worked for Ron Perelman (who owns Revlon) and was her first private chef job. Others include Regis Philbin, The Hess Family (oil company) and an heiress.

Then there are the celebs she's met, chatted with, or shared foodie experiences with such as Art Garfunkel (who serenaded her. "I didn't know if I should stop chopping," Mica recalls) and Don Henley, to name a few. She's cooked for former Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu in Southampton and can name-drop with the best of them having met Michael Douglas and his wife Catherine Zeta-Jones, Mary Hart and Fran Drescher (a big fan of Mica's cuisine). And those locales: Malibu, Jamaica (for the heiress), Fisher Island, Anguilla, Nantucket, St. Barts, The Hamptons and New York City. Many were by private jet.

You become a personal chef by working through an agency. Word of mouth plays a major part and thus, if you're good, you get referrals. Mica had lots of referrals.

Prior to cheffing, Mica worked as an executive chef at restaurants in Dallas and New York City. While in New York City a couple asked her to be their private chef and then the couple moved to Sarasota and asked her to join them. After some time, Mica moved on from that job, started Global Market Cuisine and went out on her own.

But this is her first foray as owner of her own restaurant. On this cool day back in March, Mica said Blvd's business was "steady and growing," adding that her patrons have been locals primarily, and "I love that they're finding me." The restaurant opened Dec. 15, 2020. Mica had driven by the Rosemary District location numerous times and says she "had a gut feeling" about the space and signed on.

Many of her early customers were people who drove by or were walking their dogs from the many apartment buildings in the area. Blvd has a compact kitchen where Mica does it all. She's helped by Josh Hardinger (a Ringling student), Diane, Jasmine and her sous chef, Tyrone. And her wife Lori also helps out with administrative work.

After and before restaurant hours Mica does all the shopping to go with the cooking. And, like so many, her business started during the pandemic. But what was more challenging than that - if that's possible - was Mica had a double mastectomy and a knee replacement in 2021. But this is a person who perseveres and has steely determination belied by her serene expression.

There's another story to Mica — beyond being a talented, experienced chef launching her first restaurant in Sarasota. Early in her life, Mica wanted to work in law enforcement. Family members were in the military and a grandfather was a sheriff. It's a long, but compelling story briefly summarized here (WCW will do a lengthier feature on this aspect of Mica's life in a future issue).

If you Google "Mica England" and add Dallas or discrimination, or settlement, or any of those key words, you'll see she fought a tenacious but stressful battle with the Dallas Police Depart. to make them change their discriminatory hiring practices. And she won. Not without great emotional toll -

the stress and isolation talking on a Goliath, but she simply would not back down confronting something that was wrong.

In 1987, Mica applied for a job on the Dallas Police Department and proceeded to fill out the application. There was a question that asked about an applicant's sexual activity. She balked and asked questions and disclosed that she was a lesbian. She was told, "We do not hire homosexuals (the term used then) and Mica was summarily denied employment. Encouraged by a recruiter, she applied again in 1989, told it wouldn't happen again and yet it did. Furious, Mica decided to take action in 1990, filing lawsuits against the Dallas Police Department, city of Dallas, the chief of police and Texas.

She won her case with the court ruling for her, declaring barring municipal employment due to sexual orientation unconstitutional. The application forms were redone.

We dragged the state of Texas into the '90s ... screaming, but they're there, Mica said in a story by the Associated Press published in 1992. Summarized like this, it seems pretty easy, but it wasn't. There were hateful phone calls, death threats and a Dallas police officer who asked Mica if she knew what "friendly fire" was. It was all enough to make Mica pursue another career and all those well-fed, grateful celebrities are probably happy she did, too. As for celebrities - Mica was on the Larry King show twice discussing her court case.

Mica has been married to Lori England since 2017. Lori is a teacher in the Sarasota school system. Lori's children from her previous marriage are Jena, who graduated USF Tampa and is now at SMH, and Justin who is in NYC with his dad. "We all get along," Mica states.

Also in 2017, Mica was inducted into the Dallas Holocaust and Human Rights Museum. Her story is on permanent display in the "Upstander" section of the Museum that honors her heroism along with others. On that same visit, Mica was asked to meet with the top brass at the Dallas Police Dept. who, at the same time, had a woman of color as its chief. "She said, 'thank you for being here' and she wanted me to tell my story to her deputy chiefs."

Looking back, "It all seems surreal sometimes, but it was so long ago." As for today's many changes in Florida and other states that harken back to where things used to be, she says, "People should sue. I'm astonished at the hate and ignorance."

But back to Blvd Cafe where you can find croque monsieur, Maine lobster omelet, burrata frittata, chocolate and vegan elderberry-raspberry croissants, ham and cheese croissants, vegan cinnamon rolls, gluten-free coffee cake, gluten-free mixed berry muffins and vegan and gluten-free blueberry and lavender muffins as well as NYC Davidovich bagels. She also offers two daily soups - one veggie and one meat to go along with salads. Her crispy breakfast potatoes are one of the most popular items on the menu. All are made from scratch and frozen dough comes in from Paris for some of the pastries.

Mica will be offering private dining at night in the restaurant and she's applied for a wine license, too. BlvdCafé is at 1580 Blvd. of the Arts in Sarasota's Rosemary District and open Mon.-Fri. 7-3 and Sat. 8-3. For information, call 941-203-8102 or visit blvd-cafesrq.com. Stop by and say thanks for the great meal and for standing up against discrimination - or both. 🍷

🍷 STORY: Louise Bruderle

🍷 IMAGES: Evelyn England

🍷 Mica's makeup is by Joshua Hardinger