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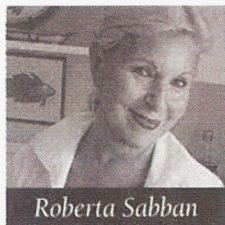
Bringing singles together and entertaining at home a satisfying mix for professional matchmaker.

As a young woman growing up in New York, Lisa Ronis imagined a career as an executive in the fashion world. She had brains, talent, boundless energy and an outgoing personality that attracted a large circle of friends. She was living the Manhattan single lifestyle, which became the subject of a decade of television shows, including *Sex and the City* and *The Millionaire Matchmaker*.

She spent her days as an executive in the high fashion industry and her free time fixing friends up on dates. These matches often led to long-term relationships and marriage.

When Internet dating became trendy, she thought it would answer every single's prayers. But it was just the opposite. Her friends began to regale her with a litany of nightmare dates. They came to her for help.

She decided to turn her natural talent for matchmaking into a



Roberta Sabban

full-time business. Her website is lisaronismatchmaking.com.

Today, after 15 years, Ronis is one of a handful of high-end headhunters for the heart where clients pay thousands of dollars to meet someone who wants to find a serious relationship that will lead to marriage. Although most of her business is on the East Coast, she also has clients from Europe and Asia. She divides her time between Manhattan and Palm Beach with detours to hot spots such as St. Bart's, Paris and the Hamptons.

Although no two clients are alike, the common denominator seems to be lifestyle. There has to be a certain level of sophistication such as an interest in culture, arts and travel.

Ronis says men are more visual. They want thin, pretty women with careers. Women will forgo looks for want a man who is smart and ambitious, she says.



Lisa Ronis is a successful matchmaker who jets between homes in New York and Palm Beach. Here in Palm Beach she has prepared a tray of mezza, or appetizers common to the Middle East.

Daily News photo by Chris Salata

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"I guess I became a matchmaker very naturally because I love people, and I am very social," Ronis said. "I love bringing people together, and I also love feeding people. My mom was a great teacher in all aspects of my life. She is also an amazing cook, so I have her to thank."

Feeding the heart

Ronis has a lot of advice on dating. For example, she says inviting someone for a cup of coffee is depressing. You might want to meet for a drink if that is going to turn into dinner, preferably in an intimate place where you can hear each other speak.

The men should always pay for the first dinners, Ronis said. After a man has taken the woman to dinner a few times, then it's lovely for the woman to reciprocate, such as with a thoughtful gift or theater tickets.

"Women who say they only use their ovens to store their Manalo Blahniks or Christian Louboutins are pathetic," in Ronis' opinion. Men very much appre-

ciate a home-cooked meal that comes from the heart.

She loves to entertain

Ronis loves to entertain at home and makes it look easy. How many restaurants can you go to, she asks? When she hosts a dinner party for six or eight at home, she selects guests likely to feel comfortable with each another.

Before planning the menu, she checks with the guests to find out about any food allergies or restricted diets.

If she is entertaining more than eight, Ronis said, she likes to serve buffet-style. Every so often, she says, a romance develops between people from one of her evenings.

There is always a place reserved for Cupid at her many parties. You just never know where or when he will show up.

It is part of her Syrian-Jewish heritage to welcome friends and family with small plates of tasty appetizers and sparkling conversation. Her menus always feature lots of fresh seasonal vegetables and rice dishes.

RONIS
Mom 'was a great teacher in all aspects of life'

RECIPES

The following recipes are from Lisa Ronis' kitchen.

Squash with Cheese

- 4 medium zucchini squash
- 1 large onion
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 cloves garlic, finely minced
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 4 large eggs
- 1½ cups grated Munster cheese

Wash and peel strips down the length of each zucchini. Cut them into 1-inch cubes. Sauté the onion slightly in the oil, add the garlic and sauté for a few more minutes until the onion is transparent. Do not let the garlic get too brown. Add the cubes of zucchini, salt and pepper to taste, and cover and cook for 20 to 30 minutes, shaking the pot every so often.

Once the zucchini is cooked through and very soft, drain it thoroughly. Grease an 8-by-12-inch baking dish. Beat the eggs in a large bowl, add the cheese and zucchini. Combine. Place the mixture in a 350-degree oven for 30 to 40 minutes until brown on top.

This dish may be served with sour cream on the side.
Makes 4 to 6 servings.

Syrian String Beans

- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 to 4 cloves garlic, finely minced
- 1 to 1½ pounds fresh string beans, ends cut off and rinsed
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 8-ounce cans plain tomato sauce
- 2 tablespoons tamarind paste

Heat the olive oil in a saucepan and add the garlic. Quickly add the string beans, salt and pepper to taste, and sauté for a few minutes. Add the tomato sauce, 1 cup of water and the tamarind paste. Stir and bring to a boil. Cover and simmer for 30 to 40 minutes or until the beans are cooked through.

Serve over cumin rice or plain white rice.
Makes 4 servings.
A variation of this recipe would substitute okra for the string beans and also add either a cup of pitted prunes

RECIPES

Chicken with Artichokes may be prepared in the morning and heated at night for serving

or dried apricots when adding the tomato sauce.

Chicken with Artichokes

- 8 chicken cutlets
 - ½ cup flour
 - Salt and pepper
 - ¼ cup corn oil or vegetable oil
 - 1 cup dry white wine
 - 1½ cups chicken broth
 - Juice from 2 lemons
 - 2 boxes frozen artichoke hearts
- Rinse the chicken cutlets and pat dry. Combine flour, salt and pepper. Dredge the cutlets in the seasoned flour and shake off any excess flour. Heat the oil in a large

skillet. Brown the cutlets slightly on each side. Remove from the pan and set aside. In the same pan with the drippings, add the white wine. Let it simmer and reduce to half.

Add the chicken broth and lemon juice. Let the mixture again reduce to half. Place the chicken in the pan and add the artichokes. Cook until the chicken and artichokes are cooked through. If the sauce is too sour, you may add a little sugar to taste.

This dish may be prepared in the morning and heated in the oven before serving in the evening.

Makes 4 servings.

Syrian Buttered Rice with Garbanzos

- ½ cup vegetable oil
- ½ cup chopped onion
- 1 cup long grain rice
- 1 can (15½ ounces) garbanzos (chick peas), drained
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1½ cups water
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 additional small onion, cut into very thin rings

Place ¼ cup of the oil in a large casserole. Sauté the onion until it is translucent. Add the rice, garbanzos, salt, pepper and water. Bring to a boil. Simmer over very low heat,

covered, for 30 minutes. Turn off the heat and add the butter.

In a frying pan, heat the rest of the oil and fry the onion rings until golden brown and crispy. Place the rice in a dish and top with the fried onions. This dish may be served with sour cream on the side.

Makes 6 servings.

Cumin Rice

- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 small onion, finely minced
- 2 to 3 cloves garlic, finely minced
- 1 cup long-grain rice
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin

- 1½ cups chicken broth
- 1 bay leaf
- Salt and pepper to taste

Heat 1 tablespoon of butter in a skillet. Add the onion and the garlic. Sauté and stir until translucent and wilted.

Place the rice in a strainer and rinse it.

Add the rice and cumin to the pan. Stir the mixture to make sure all the rice is coated with the cumin. Add the chicken broth and bay leaf. Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and cover. Simmer for 18 minutes. Discard the bay leaf and add the remaining butter. Salt and pepper to taste.

Makes 4 to 6 servings.