

# UPTOWN

LUXURY, LIFESTYLE & LIVING

## INDULGE TASTE



YUM YUM CHEFS' GRACIA WALKER AND VANESSA CANTAVE, WITH DISHES PREPARED IN THEIR BROOKLYN LOFT.

## YUM YUM CHEFS

These ladies will make you want to throw a dinner party—or at least come to their supper club.

By Charles N. Jamison Jr.  
Photography By Bill Brady

While talking to the duo behind food service company Yum Yum Chefs and sampling their food, I'm thinking, "Oh, my God, this is fabulous!" so loudly that I can't focus on what they're saying.

Yum Yum Chefs' vivacious yin and yang are Vanessa Cantave, executive chef, and Gracia Walker, who runs the business operations. After studying, partying, and graduating together from James Madison University in Virginia, they both wound up working and living in Atlanta, later arriving separately in Brooklyn. Though they started Yum Yum Chefs in New York about two years ago, they have been preparing for this part of their journey together for some time.

Cantave, an Army brat who spent her early childhood in Europe, guides Yum Yum Chefs' food preparation. After working for a while in an Atlanta ad agency, she honed her talent at The French Culinary Institute in New York. A Maryland native, Walker learned the ins and outs of owning a business early on from her entrepreneurial parents. Still, she took the corporate path after college, working in public relations for Kiehl's, Giorgio Armani Beauty, and Aveda.

The duo joined forces to establish Yum Yum Chefs, and what started as

a personal chef service has grown to an enterprise that employs several chefs. The company offers a number of services: catering, weekly home meal delivery (starting at \$135), supper club-style dinner parties at their Brooklyn loft for groups up to 10 (you can buy a seat or the whole table, starting at \$80 per person), and themed cooking classes, most of which are only one session, geared toward the professional who can't make an ongoing weekly commitment (starting at \$75 per person).

The food boasts high-end flavor, but in a way that you'd feel comfortable eating every day. Yum Yum Chefs uses local organic foods whenever possible, which provides a level of freshness. After feasting on the Roasted Acorn Squash and Chestnut Soup (garnished with crème fraîche and acorn squash chips), Seared Diver Scallops With Fresh Herb Salsa Verde, Braised Beef Shortrib with Wild Mushroom Sauce (served with a potato-horseradish cream, roasted local baby carrots, and sautéed rainbow chard), and Organic Pear Tartlet With Brown Butter and Vanilla Chantilly Cream, I tasted for the first time what is intrinsically unique and wonderful about squash, scallops, short ribs, and pears. I never knew Yum.

Yum Yum Chefs, 81 Washington St. Ste. 2-D, Brooklyn. 718.355.9113.  
yumyumchefs.com

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