

## **I Had Two Choices: Become a Mermaid or a Chef**

Well, it seems genetics influence how we turn out, and there are no mermaids in my family. Hi, I'm Deidre Keelen. Born on the Jersey Shore and raised over my family's bar and grill.

When I was 5, my dad taught me to shuck clams. My mom showed me to keep my feet on the ground, my hands in oven mitts, and my heart open wide as the Atlantic. The heart is where the journey begins, after all.

In 1991 I attended The Academy of Culinary Arts, where my studies were the impetus for a lifelong fusion of creative instinct and culinary refinement. I have over thirty years combined experience in the restaurant and hospitality industries, working both front house and behind the line.

When not in the kitchen I'm in my serenity garden. As an outdoor enthusiast and NJ native I believe in supporting local businesses, especially local farms with an emphasis on grass-fed and humanely treated livestock.

Do I look back and wonder what life as a mermaid would've been like? Do I swim in the ocean pretending my legs are glued together, that I'm homeward clamward bound to cuddle my pet seahorse? Of course not. Really.

I do, however, look forward to sharing my passion for cooking and love for life with you. So don't be shy. Let's connect.