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A Diamond &
Strawberry
Valentine

LOVE
BYTES

FROGGY &
THE SHIKSA

THE
STONES

ITZHAK
PERLMAN



38



48



42



20

pulse

- 14 **explore**
The month's event listings to help plan your day or your stay
- 19 **devour**
Where to find some of the best eats, drinks and foodie happenings in the Valley
- 20 **desire**
Sin City abounds in world-class shopping... these are a few of our favorite things
- 22 **discover**
Places to go, cool things to do, hip people to see in the most exciting city in the World
- 23 **mingle**
Snapshots of the latest, greatest events

live

- 30 **speak**
In the shadow of the Holocaust... a Jew and a shiksa walk into a bar...
- 34 **know**
Leonard and Judy Stone provide the perfect template for Las Vegas power couples.
- 38 **taste**
Strawberry fields forever supply berries for our tables year round. Once thought by the French to be an aphrodisiac, chocolate-dipped or au naturel their sweetness is sure to enhance a romantic interlude.

think

- 42 **Daredevil Dating**
Break the mold. Get creative with your dating.
- 48 **Eat, Love, Sculpt**
Dorit Schwartz's art, philanthropy and gastronomy exemplify the principle of living life with passion.
- 52 **Love Bytes**
Long distance relationships in the digital age.

on the cover

A Diamond and Strawberry Valentine. Model: Rachel Victoria Williams, Photograph: Steven Wilson. Platinum ring with 3.09 cushion shaped VS2 stone and 1.46 pave marquise, designed by *Jewels by Star*, supplied by *T-Bird Jewels*

grill

- 58 **Itzhak Perlman, Violinist**
The month's spotlight on a person of interest



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M A G A Z I N E

think

INSIDE

Daredevil Dating @ 40

Eat, Love, Sculpt @ 46

Love Bytes @ 52



Eat, Love, Sculpt

By Marilyn Larocque

Food photos by Steven Wilson • Sculpture photos by Britt Pierson

To paraphrase Johnny Lee's country music hit, sculptor Dorit Sharoni Schwartz finds love in all the *right places ... home and family, cooking, community and her consuming passion, art.*

"I have a very full, loving life," she said, her face illuminated with feeling. "The foundation is my family, then our home, which nurtures our family; next, food — which not only nourishes our bodies but brings family and friends together. I devote time to community service to try to improve the quality of life for others. Art, however, is my life's journey," she acknowledges, "allowing myself to be a vessel through which creativity flows. It has become an incredible friend who penetrates deeper and deeper into my existence and identity."

Art has been a love of Dorit's life since she was a teenager in Tel Aviv. She continued developing her talent after moving to Los Angeles with her family when she was 17. Although she started college at 18, she also got her foot in the door of the kitchen of her parents' restaurant, which she managed, and became manager of their successful clothing and jewelry store in Westwood. College fell by the wayside.

Real estate developer Ronnie Schwartz entered her life in 1977. They married in 1980 and eventually had a daughter Shannie, and sons, Yoni and Neiv, now 23, 25 and 21, respectively. When the family moved to Las Vegas in 1996, Dorit abandoned art and put her fashion creativity to work by opening a boutique in Summerlin. (The massive 1994 earthquake in Los Angeles shattered most of Dorit's sculptures and, at least temporarily, her enthusiasm for art.)

This detour from sculpture ended when she met and started working with Sharon Gainsburg, an artist in the Las Vegas Art Dis-

trict. The experience launched Dorit's love affair with nature. "Sharon introduced me to stone — marble and alabaster," Dorit explains. "I had previously worked in clay, a very different medium. I became passionate about stone as an expression of my artistic soul. Stone gets my creative self out of the box."

Why sculpting, not painting?

"Sculpting is more challenging than painting," she says. "I love working with a three-dimensional object. A painting is one-dimensional. It appeals to just one sense, sight. You can't touch it and bring it into your heart. You can walk around a sculpture, view it from different angles, have a different emotional experience. As the light in the room changes, so does the sculpture. It evokes a different response. Some of my pieces are displayed on rotating stands, so you, essentially, have a new sensual perception as you change their position."

Always seeking new ways to express her artistic fervor, Dorit has added crystals to her sculpture materials and created a luminous new collection *The Light Within*. "It, too, is based on nature," she says. "The pieces explore relationships and organic materials that represent balance, harmony and a sense of connection with nature and one's self."

"When I go into my studio," Dorit continues, "I'm in awe of the magnificence that exists within natural elements. Although they've been around for thousands of years, through sculpture they assume a different form and become sacred gifts from nature."

Crystals are "delicate shards, like snowflakes. They differ not just in physical properties but in spiritual aspects. I believe they assist with growth toward your soul's highest potential, and also the high-



Dorit Schwartz with her work "Guardian Angels"



Top left: Dates add a sweet note to chicken.

Bottom left: A variety of fingerling potatoes with butter gold potatoes is accented with parsley roots, sweet onion, and garlic.

Right: Dorit sets a bountiful Passover table with a beautifully illustrated Haggadah at each place setting. The food is served 'family style.'

est good of all humanity. Before the piece is completed, I place the crystals out in the sun's rays to incorporate and maintain positive energy. For me, crystals working in harmony with stone and wood create yet another artistic expression from nature.

"My pieces invite a contemplative and reflective mood," she believes, "distancing the viewer from hectic day-to-day activities. I love to see the expressions on people's faces when they look at my pieces, how they connect with them, their visual, tactile, emotional responses, their calm when they touch them. The sculptures help them become one with nature and bring nature into their home, and part of me goes with them."

In her kitchen, Dorit draws on her heritage for inspiration. Sephardic traditions, handed down from generation to generation, traveled with her from Tehran to Israel to Los Angeles — kitchen to kitchen.

Tempo, her family's restaurant in Encino, put cooking on the front burner. "Both my brother, Ygal Avner, and my dad, Haviv, cooked," Dorit says. "My mother, Dalia, was bookkeeper, and I managed the restaurant. I spent a lot of time in the kitchen. The Israel-Mediterranean food was a magnet, not only for the local Jewish community but also for visitors from Israel for whom it was a 'home away from home.' We held services every Friday night and served a special meal," Dorit recalls. "Entertainers performed. It was a very

special time and place, overflowing with camaraderie and warmth.

"Everyone in our family is passionate about food," she says, "although some are more interested in cooking while others care more about eating! Because Ronnie is Ashkenazi, I always include customs and foods of his heritage in our meals. There is a difference, you know. Ashkenazi food is not as bold as Sephardic, which stands out with taste and color."

The Schwartz's backyard is a veritable Garden of Eden, where herbs, fig, apple and lemon trees, raspberries, grapes and pomegranates grow. "I love cooking for the holidays," Dorit says. "There will be 20 of us together for Passover in March."

Preparing for Passover evokes fond memories and emotions for Dorit.

"You experience Passover with all your senses," she says. "In my family, the night of the first Seder was the accumulation of weeks of work. My mother climbed up on a step stool to bring down the Passover pots and pans. Cleaning the house, shopping for groceries and coordinating the cooking were group efforts. Grandmothers, grandfathers, aunts, uncles, cousins and neighbors were all welcome at my parents' house for the Seder. Our table extended from the end of the living room through the entryway and ended at the kitchen door. I remember wonderful aromas from the kitchen, laughter at the table, voices of old and young, family melodies. It's the same to-



Top: Jeweled Rice, a Persian dish with miniature Persian raisins and sliced almonds, green beans with almonds, and cherry tomatoes create a colorful feast.

Bottom left: A magnificent wine fountain centers the table.

Bottom right: Carrots add interest to a roast leg of lamb, a centerpiece of the Sephardic holiday tradition.



Dorit Schwartz (in the blue dress) at the unveiling of the St. Jude Children's Research Hospital's "Heart Sculptures" in Symphony Park @ The Smith Center, March 30, 2012

day. We continue to have several generations around our Seder table and still continue to teach our children about the Exodus.

"We put a haggadah at each place setting," she said. "We follow all the rituals — dipping vegetables in salt water and eating 'bitter herb' and charoset. The mixture of the charoset resembles the mortar used by the Hebrews to build Egyptian cities. The focal point of our table is a silver wine fountain with small cups. Everyone drinks four cups of wine and eats matzo. There's a silver bowl to catch the drips of wine to signify the 10 plagues."

The meal is a collaboration among family members, with each one preparing a favorite recipe. "My sister-in-law Debi makes a special matzo ball soup," Dorit says. "My sister-in-law Rachel prepares a great vegetable-potato kugel. Gefilte fish is my mother-in-law's signature dish. I use our fresh garden herbs to stuff a roast boneless leg of lamb that is a centerpiece of the Sephardic holiday tradition. I serve it with Jeweled Rice, a Persian dish with miniature Persian raisins, sliced almonds, salt, pepper and grape seed oil. The Seder brings us all together. Family is like branches on a tree ... all going in different directions yet sharing the same roots. That's what we're instilling in our children."

Dorit's love and caring carries over into community service. In 2009, she and Tanya Amid created the Las Vegas Honors St. Jude Gala, "An Affair of the Art Heart," a festive evening of food, fellowship and fundraising for the famous ALSAC/St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis. Highlight of the evening is an auc-

tion of three-dimensional, 5-foot-tall anatomical heart sculptures. Designed by Las Vegas artist Miguel Rodriguez and molded of white gypsum, they're transformed into works of art painted by local artists. In three years, the gala has raised more than \$1 million. In 2013, the event is scheduled for May 4 at the Cleveland Clinic/Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health. (Contact: Lainie Strouse, lainie.strouse@stjude.org; phone 800-227-6737.)

A heart presented to The Smith Center is permanently displayed in Symphony Park. Two are at City Hall, two more at UNLV. Ten sculptures from the 2012 collection form a "traveling" exhibition, spending two months in various locations. They're at Jackie Goughan Plaza, adjacent to the El Cortez downtown, until Feb. 6. Then they'll move to The District in Henderson.

Dorit and Ronnie blend their philanthropic enthusiasm in AIPAC (American-Israel Public Affairs Committee) and are also involved in fundraising for their temple Chabad. Dorit recently was appointed to the board of the Melton Adult Jewish School, a project of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

To start the New Year, Dorit opened a gallery in her home, where she displays her artworks and pieces by other artists. "It's a dream come true," she says, "an opportunity to share my love of art and nature. We welcome visitors by appointment. It's a very personal space in which to showcase two of my great passions: my art and my home." (www.DSchwartzsculptor.com; 702.768.4998)



Top left, "Nature's Womb"
Above, "Safety Nest"
Left, "Meditation"