

# SAN DIEGO HOME/GARDEN

LIFESTYLES

18<sup>th</sup>  
Annual  
KITCHENS  
OF THE YEAR  
5 BIG WINNERS!

WESTERN WHITE HOUSE GARDEN  
— EXCLUSIVE COVERAGE

EXTRAORDINARY PARTY LAUNCHES  
OUR NEW LIFESTYLES SECTION

WWW.SDHG.NET \$3.95



JUNE 2009



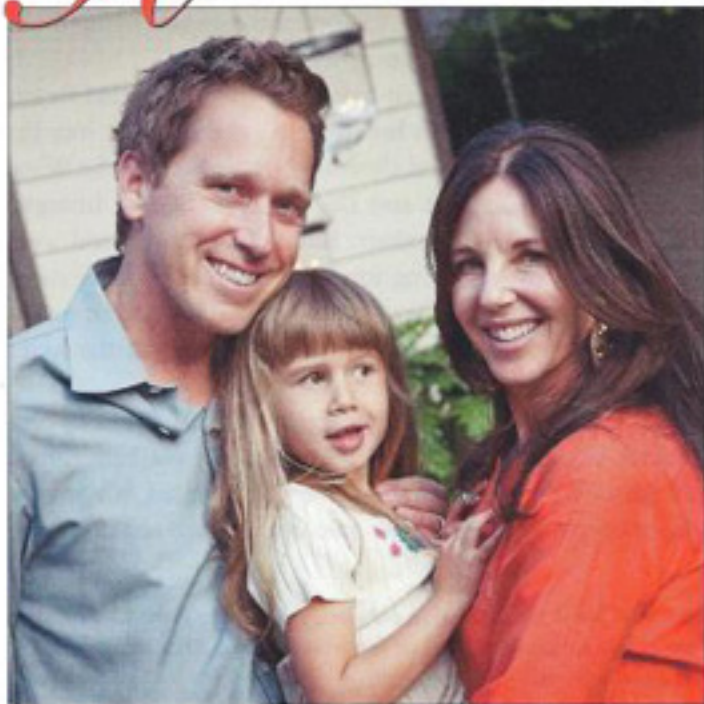
# Chocolate, anyone?

*Karen Krasne's sweet celebration of spring*

BY NEAL MATTHEWS | PHOTOGRAPHY BY GARY PAYNE



*R*ays from the last sundown of winter '09 glinted in the tiny wrinkles on the edible gold leaf scattered artfully atop Karen Krasne's table of delicacies. It was the vernal equinox in the 20th year since the native San Diegan returned home and opened Extraordinary Desserts on Fifth Avenue, with seating for 10. So there was symmetry in inviting 10 old friends over to her Mission Hills home to celebrate the anniversary, the return of spring, and the launch of her five new chocolate bars.



If you've indulged at either of Krasne's two restaurant/bakery/gourmet enterprises, which together now seat more than 200 people, you've already experienced a little of what her home is like: subtly textured, with a grace and inner warmth that's so San Diego. As her husband,

Opposite: In the kitchen courtyard of her Mission Hills home, Karen Krasne's party begins. Far left is Denise Lepaglia; middle background are Brian Linn, Aaron Anderson and Martin Boeni. Seated at right are Sharla Hilburn, Krasne and her daughter, Sahara. Above: Around the koi pond patio, guests George Nelson, Andrew Whitcomb, Leona Whiteside and John Adams enjoy drinks with host Jamie Kiskis. Left: Krasne with Kiskis and Sahara.

Opposite: In the kitchen courtyard of her Mission Hills home, Karen Krasne's party begins. Far left is Denise Lepaglia; middle background are Brian Linn, Aaron Anderson and Martin Boeni. Seated at right are Sharla Hilburn, Krasne and her daughter, Sahara. Above: Around the koi pond patio, guests George Nelson, Andrew Whitcomb, Leona Whiteside and John Adams enjoy drinks with host Jamie Kiskis. Left: Krasne with Kiskis and Sahara.



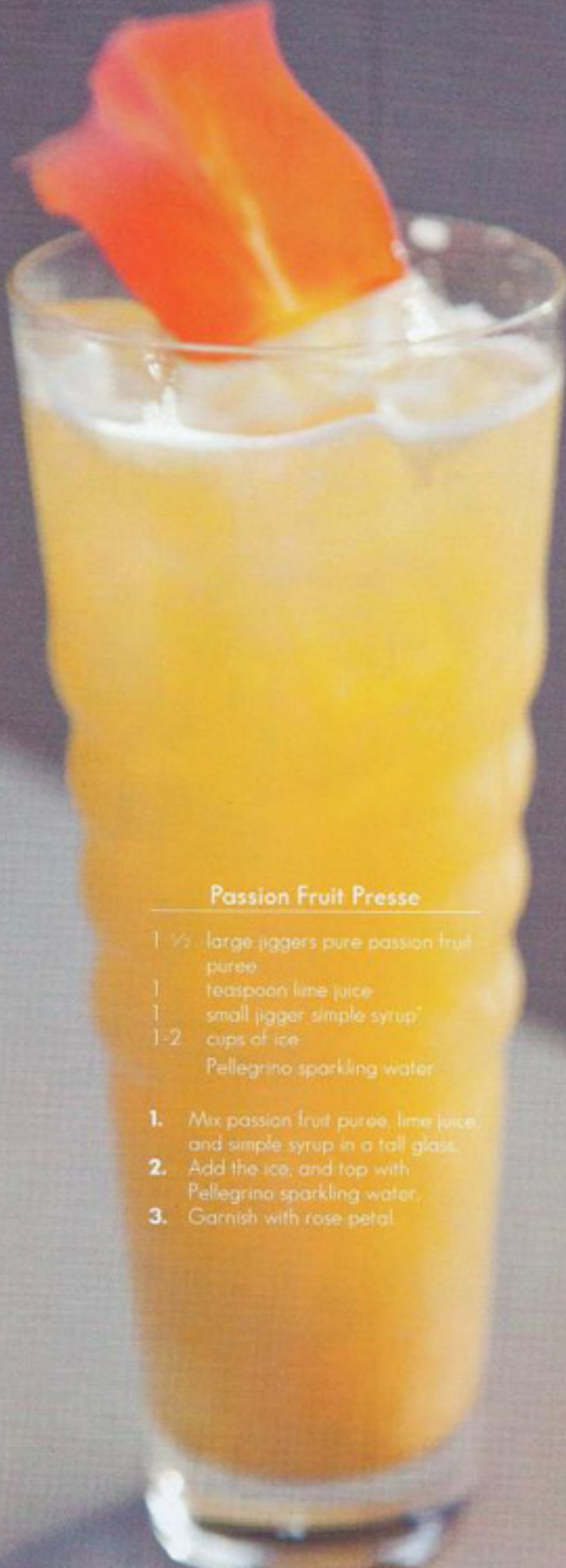
*"The way she talked about food was an inspiration. The sensuality, the flow. The process of making food is similar to making architecture."*

Jamie Kiskis (he started the fantasy sports game Web site *Ontherecordsports.com*), poured flutes of Gruet Blanc de Noir, and their five-year-old daughter, Sahara, circled the pastry table like a shark, Karen's lush laugh floated in and out of the open doors to the kitchen and compact living room of the contemporary Craftsman-style house.

"It's always got the Karen touch. It's real," marveled Bryan Farres, who grew up with her in Del Cerro. He went into his family's wine business and they recently sold out of the Wine Bank downtown. Farres and Denise Lapaglia had brought their two-month-old daughter, Kaia, to the party, and were standing near the glittering food table. "Every time we come here there's something new," said Farres. "It's the attention to detail, like those slices of cucumber floating in the water pitcher. No corner missed."

Krasne has lived 12 years in this house, and has gradually converted it into a Zenful sanctuary. A *feng shui* consultant helped her position the furnishings in the eight-walled, irregularly shaped bedroom. The architect who designed the outdoor space,

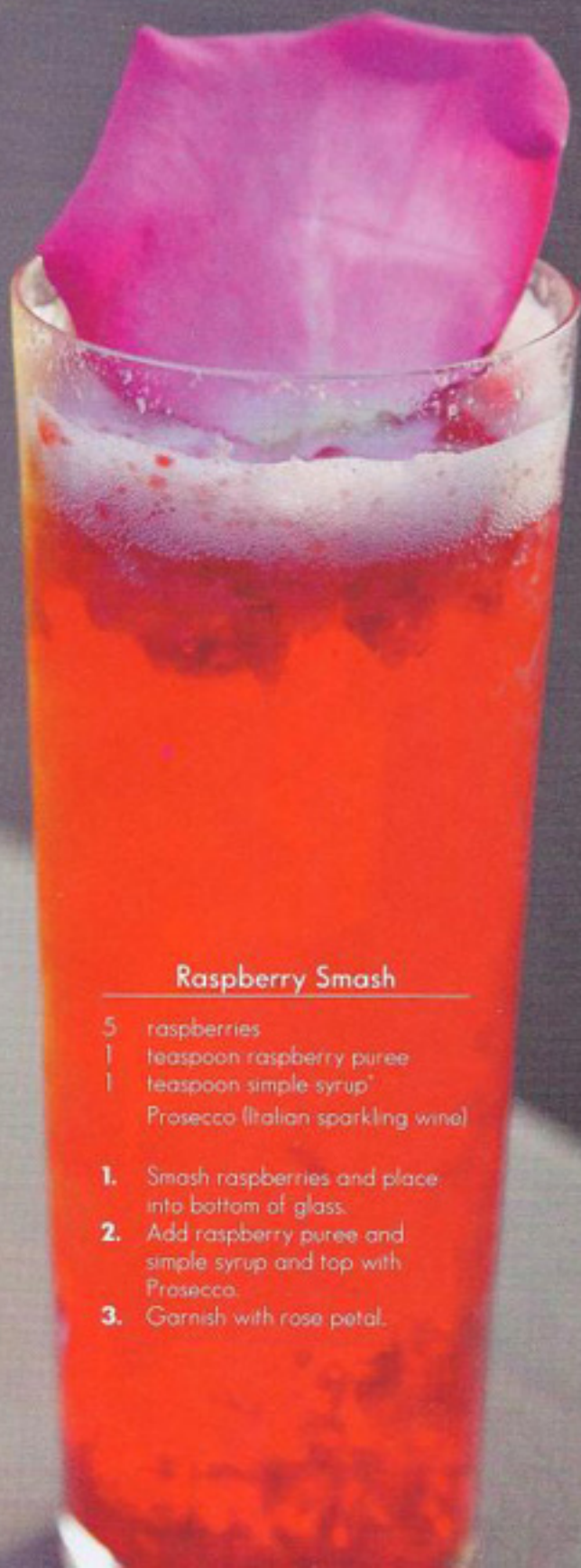
**Above:** A feast of sumptuous delicacies awaits guests. **Opposite:** Two of the cocktails served at the party: Passion Fruit Presse and Raspberry Smash.



### Passion Fruit Presse

- 1 1/2 large jiggers pure passion fruit puree
- 1 teaspoon lime juice
- 1 small jigger simple syrup\*
- 1-2 cups of ice
- Pellegrino sparkling water

1. Mix passion fruit puree, lime juice, and simple syrup in a tall glass.
2. Add the ice, and top with Pellegrino sparkling water.
3. Garnish with rose petal.



### Raspberry Smash

- 5 raspberries
- 1 teaspoon raspberry puree
- 1 teaspoon simple syrup\*
- Prosecco (Italian sparkling wine)

1. Smash raspberries and place into bottom of glass.
2. Add raspberry puree and simple syrup and top with Prosecco.
3. Garnish with rose petal.

\*Two parts water to one part sugar





Aaron Anderson ([www.studio-anderson.com](http://www.studio-anderson.com)), was at the party. He explained that Karen made it easy for him to find the right vibe, which includes a lot of custom metal work. A Starphire glass-enclosed fire pit that looks like a flaming aquarium rests atop a stainless-steel pedestal. Behind a line of robust *Asplenium* mother ferns, a Waterjet-cut cement fiberboard privacy screen broadens the scale and concentrates the intimacy.

"The way she talked about food was an inspiration," said Anderson. "The sensuality, the flow. The process of making food is similar to making architecture."

He pointed to a Moroccan lamp. "That's where the screen pattern came from, like a metal lamp unrolled flat. It all flowed from there." The screen echoes similar ones at the Union Street restaurant.

Like her restaurants, Krasne's house is filled with art and craft work gathered on her global travels. "Each room has a travel origin," Krasne said, "but they all get a little diluted. See that black lotus on the wall?" she pointed through the doors into the kitchen to a hammered bronze sculpture she had had made in Jaipur, India. "That was meant for the restaurant, but I couldn't let it go."

There's a flow of sensibility, taste and art pieces between her home and her restaurants that also includes her friends. Most of the food was artfully positioned on a custom stainless-steel patio table, made by another guest — old friend, Brian Linn (Vincent Designs, Barrio Logan), who also did all of the metal-



Opposite: Krasne and daughter Sahara. Top: Sahara checks out the table of sweets while her mother chats with Lorena Whiteside (left) and Aster Adams (right). Above: Aster and husband, John Adams, with Andrew Whitcomb.



Top: Jamie Kiskis, Karen Krasne and Aaron Anderson (left); Martin Boeni and Brian Linn (foreground, right). Above: Kaia Lapaglia. Opposite: Krasne's Chocolate Croissant Bread Pudding.

work in the Union Street restaurant. It looks strong enough to hold a locomotive, but tonight was piled high with the classically trained pastry master's signature bounty.

There were the new chocolate bars in five flavors, each derived from a cake on the menu, made in association with luxury chocolatier Valerie Confections: bittersweet (Au Choclat), darkened milk chocolate bar with caramelized organic hazelnuts (Gianduia), white chocolate with raspberries, organic hazelnuts and almonds (Linzer), darkened milk chocolate with raspberries (Truffe Framboise) and bittersweet chocolate bar filled with salted caramel (20th Anniversary).

A plate of miniature Greek panini with feta and olives sat beside Krasne's 20th anniversary "Noiramel" dark chocolate cake with salted caramel mousse. The other chocolate bar inspirations, including the rum-laced Gianduia, one of the restaurant's best sellers, and the white chocolate Linzer Torte, almost looked too good to eat.

Orange rose petals and violet delphinium blossoms decorated the little treasures, and the edible gold leaf sparkled like pixie dust in young Sahara's eyes. She was right. This was not a time to linger over the healthy panini. With her mom's laugh playing like music around her, Sahara's hand disappeared into the brownie plate and the sweet feast of spring '09 could no longer be restrained. ∞

Where to find it, page 140

