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PERSISTENCE STILL NOT OVERRATED

Did you make a New Year's resolution to write more? Me neither. That's not what motivates me.

You probably have ideas for stories every day. Ideas are cheap and risk free. They are your secrets. You generate them from everyday events, associations, memories and experiences, even "I could have written that" responses to published work.

Most of the time ideas float in and out of my brain. I discard almost all because I'm not interested enough to pursue them. The ones that stay hook into my passion or sense of curiosity. I turn them over, fine-tuning, developing angles, wondering whom to interview, where the story will fit. I am a Finisher. As a result I write less, but when I start something I know I can get to the end, which for me is publication.

Starters have tons of ideas too, probably more than Finishers. Generating ideas is what gives Starters pleasure. They are fabulous brainstormers. But they find it difficult to go past the "what if" stage, or they get distracted by new ideas and lose interest in the old ones.

I realized recently that both Starters and Finishers experience fear. Fear that the idea isn't good enough, that no one wants it, that when it gets into print or on the web it will have huge mistakes or holes.

After 30 years of writing, I still have these fears. People always find it hard to believe, but I know writers far more successful than I who feel this same emotion. The way I deal with it is to keep going. I keep researching, refining and pitching until something clicks. Then I feel more confident.

My record is 18 edits of one story and 4 rejections, until Salon.com accepted it. It's a short humorous essay, not about food. You can read it here:

<http://www.salon.com/people/feature/1999/07/03/citizen/index.html>

It's a cliché to say that persistence pays, and I don't mean to oversimplify. But I have found that when I go after something doggedly, I get there eventually.

Here's to an accomplished, persistent 2006 for all of us.

Best,
Dianne

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ALUMNI NEWS FROM STUDENTS AND WRITERS I'VE COACHED

I coached Akasha Richmond on a proposal that eventually led to the release of this new book: *Hollywood Dish: More than 150 Delicious, Healthy Recipes from Hollywood's Chef to the Stars*.

http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1583332413/qid=1138751806/sr=2-1/ref=pd_bbs_b_2_1/104-1007657-2301549?s=books&v=glance&n=283155

Edible East Bay published two feature articles by Nani Steele in its premier issue: a profile of a new bakery owner and a piece on a community project that redistributes surplus fruit and vegetables. Nani has also freelanced for MSNBC and Growers and Grocers.

<http://www.edibleeastbay.com/>
<http://www.growersandgrocers.net>

An essay on pumpkins on Faith Kramer's new blog, Blog Appetit, won the Editors' Choice awards from Slashfood. Faith also has a regular paying post called The Chocolate Box on SugarSavvy, where she writes about See's chocolates.

<http://www.clickblogappetit.blogspot.com/>
<http://www.slashfood.com/>
<http://www.sugarsavvy.net>

Faith attended the Book Passage Food Writing Conference twice and took a 6-week class from me through The Writing Salon. I'll probably have a class there again in the fall.

<http://www.writingsalons.com/>

Laurie Zerga has had three articles published since attending the Book Passage Food Writing Conference in 2004. Her latest, on international food markets in Alameda, appears in the January/February issue of *Alameda* magazine.

Brett Emerson, "a chef in search of a muse," started the blog In Praise of Sardines, I met Brett when he came to a Litquake panel on food and travel writing I moderated.

<http://inpraiseofsardines.typepad.com/>

Gisele Peres started the blog Pain Perdu to write about food, family, and New Orleans.

<http://painperdu.blogstream.com/>

If you are a student or writer with news, please send an email to dj@diannej.com and I will post it in my next newsletter.

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UPDATE ON MY BOOK

Last year was a heady one with the release of Will Write for Food. Since my last newsletter in October, my book was

Named one of the top 25 fall backlist titles by Marlowe & Co., my publisher (That means that even though it wasn't new anymore, it still sold well in 2005);

Called a "terrific new book" by former *Gourmet* Contributing Editor David Rosengarten, author of *The Rosengarten Report*, in an end-of-the-year roundup;

Recommended in a December best book roundup on "Books for Foodies" by the *Seattle Times*;

Recommended twice by Clotilde Dusoulier, she of the six-figure cookbook deal, to her 10,000 daily visitors;

<http://chocolateandzucchini.com/>

and used in food writing classes around the US, including those at the CIA and New School in New York, and at an online Mediabistro class.

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NEW MAGAZINES AND BOOKS

Edible Communities, started by graphic designer Tracey Ryder and photographer Carole Topalian, gives entrepreneurs across the US a template to set up newsletters that support local farmers, chefs, food artisans, farmers' markets, and regional foods. Today there are 18 *Edible* newsletters and more in the planning stages.

Find an Edible Community near you by clicking on the website below. If you don't see one, you may want to start a newsletter of your own.

<http://www.ediblecommunities.com/pages/membernews.htm>

Chow, a new national food magazine launched from San Francisco, has temporarily suspended publication for the next six months. You can now access the magazine online at

<http://www.chowmag.com/>

Foodspring, a new consumer magazine produced by the National Association for the Specialty Food Trade, will target young, active, adventurous specialty food shoppers. Editorial content will focus on trends, new products, regional and international categories and food-centric travel.

<http://www.foodspring.com/>

Contact Denise Purcell, managing editor, dpurcell@nasft.org, (212) 482-6440 x 123.

Alimentum: The Literature of Food, a twice-yearly literary review dedicated to food, premieres this winter. Content includes fiction, poetry and creative nonfiction. Author Mark Kurlansky sits on its advisory board. The website even tells you how to submit work, a refreshing change.

<http://www.alimentumjournal.com>

Blast, a national initiative of The Food Project, is starting an online magazine called reap/sow. This magazine will "celebrate young people who are revolutionizing the way that food is grown, distributed, and eaten."

<http://hotpepper.thefoodproject.org/blog/?p=93>

Foodism, a "Culinary and Cultural Digest" of Bay Area-based restaurants and events, has premiered with a lavishly illustrated home page. The site features "rants, reviews and ruminations on food, wine, sustainability, biodiversity, poetry, politics and pastry." If you are the former student who told me you are writing for this site, please send me an email, dj@diannej.com.

<http://www.foodism.com/>

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NEW MFK FISHER AWARD

A new cash award from Les Dames d'Escoffier International honors MFK Fisher, a sensuous American culinary writer who wrote on the art of eating. Awards are for \$1000, \$500 and \$250. They are open to women who have published nonfiction culinary writing during 2004 and 2005. Entries must be postmarked by March 1, 2006.

<http://www.mfkfisher.org/award.htm>

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MY UPCOMING CLASSES AND APPEARANCES

February 17 - 19, 2006

Panelist, Food Writing seminar
The San Francisco Writers Conference
San Francisco, CA

<http://www.sanfranciscowritersconference.com/pages.cfm?ID=3>

April 20, 2006 - May 11, 2006

4 Tuesdays, 7 - 9 P.M. \$150
The Art of Writing a Cookbook
Book Passage
Corte Madera, CA.
(415) 927-0960

Have you always wanted to write a cookbook but haven't known how or where to begin? Perhaps you've been putting it off for "later." Join me and we'll shape and lengthen your idea into a full cookbook that will delight editors and agents. These classes will get you going with lots of examples, in-class exercises, short assignments and support. We'll also cover:

How to write recipes and test them
How to write a proposal or get self-published, and
How to get your cookbook published and marketed.

http://www.booksite.com/texis/scripts/oop/click_ord/+gewlZHe_C83qBmeDz7S8mwww/detail.html?sid=4847&deptid=OTHER&catid=evening&itemno=x78983

Next summer, 2007

A Week of Food Writing in France
At Latitude, a non-profit cultural center
The Lot Valley, Southern France
\$1250 and up, depending on accommodation

Guidebook writer Karen Brown calls this part of the Lot Valley "the most stunning 51 kilometer stretch in France. The Lot Valley rivals the Dordogne and yet remains relatively undiscovered and less traveled."

Framed by limestone cliffs and a medieval castle, Latitude's headquarters is a 14th century *moulin*, with a turret and stone hearth that once milled flour for a chateau across the river. The school sits at the edge of the Lot River, about 625 km southeast of Paris and 45 km east of Cahors (pop. 20,000).

The class: If you love the pleasures of the table, join me in writing about how food affects memory, place, and identity. You might write about cooking, meals around the family table, restaurants, travel, your mother's kitchen or friendships – whatever inspires you.

Learn how to make your stories come alive on the page, whether for a private journal or for publication. In-class exercises give you the tools to improve your writing immediately. Selected writing samples by famous writers will inspire and inform you.

Outside class we'll visit an outdoor market where we'll take in the scene, the people and the food. Regional specialties in the Lot Valley include duck, lamb, walnuts, foie gras, and prunes. You'll slow down, relax, and employ all the senses, then come back to class to write about the experience.

Students at all levels of experience are welcome, including food-loving spouses, partners and friends. If you are already at work on a cookbook idea or writing a book, this workshop makes room for you to pursue your project.

Form new friendships with fellow food-lovers over wine and long Latitude dinners of cassoulet and coq au vin. Explore the countryside, wineries, and medieval villages in your free time. This class is limited to 12 participants. To find out more about the cultural center, visit <http://www.latitude.org/>

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OTHER CLASSES YOU MIGHT FIND VALUABLE

The Symposium for Professional Wine Writers at Meadowood, Napa Valley
March 6-9, 2006

\$475 (plus hotel fee of \$215 per person)

Open to professional wine writers, wine/food writers, and wine/travel writers.

<http://www.winewriterssymposium.org/index.php?mode=welcome>

Many students have told me they want to become wine writers, and this would be a fine way to learn the skill

The Symposium for Professional Food Writers
March 15-19, 2006

The Greenbrier, White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia

Symposium plus hotel: \$1596.76 - \$1771.16

Open to professional food writers.

<http://www.greenbrier.com/site/foodwriters/about.aspx>

I attended this conference seven years ago and found it a valuable and validating experience, particularly in terms of meeting speakers, who include well-known writers, editors and agents.

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Please send this email to anyone you think might be interested. To change your email address or unsubscribe, please email me: dj@diannej.com

I will not rent, trade or sell my email list to anyone for any reason whatsoever.

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Author of *Will Write for Food: The Complete Guide to Writing Cookbooks, Restaurant Reviews, Articles, Memoir, Fiction, and More* (Marlowe & Co./Avalon)