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THE DISH
 LUNCH DATE



Christy Scott Cashman.



Debbie DiMasi.



Going Hardcover

The hosts of *Open Book Club* on NECN chat about good reading— and great food. BY VICTORIA ABBOTT RICCARDI

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Christy Scott Cashman and Debbie DiMasi are the hosts of *Open Book Club*, which airs the first Sunday of each month at 7:30 P.M. on New England Cable News (NECN). DiMasi lives in Boston's North End and is originally from Wellesley, where she inherited her love of reading from her mother: "She would read to me every night. I love all kinds of books—biographies, fiction, nonfiction. I often have multiple books going," she says. Back Bay resident Cashman was one of 10 children growing up on a poultry farm in Novelty, Ohio, and her mother also loved reading. According to Cashman, "My mother named me after a book! She fell in love with *Christy* by Catherine Marshall."

THE INTRODUCTION

Several years ago Cashman and her husband (Jay Cashman of Jay Cashman Inc. construction company) invited DiMasi and her husband (Massachusetts House Speaker Salvatore F. DiMasi) to a dinner at their home. The two women hit it off, and their friendship blossomed through Cashman's Spaghetti Club, a monthly get-together of eight to 10 women who gather at Cashman's house to play cards, drink wine, and eat pasta (a different member cooks each time).

INSPIRATION FOR OPEN BOOK CLUB

Cashman came up with the idea of exploring what authors were thinking when they wrote a book, versus what readers were thinking when they read it, while hosting a dinner for PEN New England (Poets/Playwrights, Essayists, Editors, Novelists) at her home in 2001. The idea became *Open Book Club*, a half-hour program in which the cohorts discuss a new or noteworthy book with its author and two celebrity guests.

FAVORITE LOCAL RESTAURANT DISHES

DiMasi loves Limoncello's rose-shaped pasta with Montasio cheese and white truffle oil (as well as the stuffed artichoke), Prezza's mushroom risotto, and L'Osteria's chicken with Marsala and mushrooms. Cashman favors Grill 23's grilled swordfish and steak, Meyers + Chang's red-curry-spiced squash soup and chicken with rice, and the seared tuna at B&G Oysters.

FOND CHILDHOOD FOOD MEMORY

DiMasi: "[I remember] when my mother would make goulash. It's the same feeling I get when I make tomato sauce and it's snowy outside and I'm home."
 Cashman: "I used to help my father pluck chickens. I remember the feeling of taking the feathers out of the skin—they came out so easily."

THE LUNCH

Willow and tan, Cashman arrived at Morton's the Steakhouse at the Seaport wearing gray dress shorts, a green paisley blouse, and a camel blazer. DiMasi, also extremely slender, arrived in a black suit and white top. After a starter cappuccino, Cashman enjoyed half a Morton's salad (chopped lettuce, egg, anchovies, and blue cheese dressing), the "Not so Big" filet with Asian slaw and mashed potatoes, and another cappuccino. DiMasi ate half a Morton's prime sirloin burger (rare) with Cheddar cheese (no onions) and french fries.

GUILTY PLEASURES

Cashman: "McDonald's fries, a double cheeseburger, and large Coke; home made chocolate chip cookies (a little gooey on the inside); and a huge martini."
 DiMasi: "I [can't think of] any. After I had my daughter, I could eat anything I love subs, and I have potato chips almost every day." (Both women work out at the Sports Club/LA. For additional exercise Cashman rides horse and DiMasi walks her bichon frise.)

MAKES HER BLANCH

Cashman: Fried lard served at a wedding in Romania. "It was like Vaseline."
 DiMasi: "I was once given an entire truffle to eat. I was 18 and had been told it was a delicacy. It was the hardest thing to get down."

IF HER LIFE WERE A BOOK, THE FINAL SENTENCE WOULD BE...

Cashman: "Stay tuned for the sequel!"
 DiMasi: "I tried to make a difference and save some lives."

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