

Why *NCIS* star Pauley Perrette and her two best friends have all the ingredients for a sweet family business



# Southern COMFORT

**P**auley Perrette leans against a gleaming glass display case filled with cookies, cupcakes, bars and biscuits, wearing her signature off-camera attire: a black tee, skinny jeans and Chuck Taylors. Hair in braids, bright red lips, tattooed arms and a megawatt smile, she exudes the lovable sensibilities of her alter ego, *NCIS*' Abby Sciuto. While the chokers, fishnets and white lab coat wait for her in Los Angeles, today in Manhattan, Perrette dons her new favorite uniform: a little black apron, with a simple "Donna Bell's" stitched across the front.

The quaint bakery, named after Perrette's mother, pays homage to her storied family recipes. Here's a taste of how one famous daughter—and her friends—are helping a true Southern lady's legacy live on.

## FRIENDS WHO BAKE TOGETHER, STAY TOGETHER

In 2010, while flying back to Manhattan after a Paris fashion shoot for *Watch!* magazine, Pauley and her best friend, Darren Greenblatt, had an epiphany: they should open a bakery in their old Hell's Kitchen stomping ground and have their foodie best friend help run it. Twenty-four hours later, Matthew Sandusky said yes and Donna Bell's Bake Shop was born. "All these things were happening and the stars were aligning," says Greenblatt. "Matthew's dream his whole life has been to own a little café, own a little shop. He was the food guy, I was the business guy, and Pauley was marketing, PR and celebrity. We had this really great trinity. For us it was this perfect storm of things, life change and the idea of making delicious \$3 items feel like a luxury brand."

## PROOF IN THE (BANANA) PUDDING

Before Donna Bell's Bake Shop opened in April 2011, her legendary treats were already drawing a fan base on the Jersey Shore, thanks to Greenblatt's entrepreneurial spirit. Friends with Perrette for more than 20 years and a self-described "Jewish Yankee who loved to make drop biscuits," he had practically grown up in Donna Bell's Alabama "lake house" kitchen. When she died of cancer in 2002, he inherited some of her favorite recipes and didn't quite know what to do with them—until life intervened. After 15 years in the fashion industry, the recession forced a career change and, on a whim, he decided to buy a vintage ice cream truck and sling Southern treats. "I went from \$3,000 handbags to \$3 banana pudding," he laughs. "It was a very small little



business, but it showed me, by the end of that summer, that there was market for something like this. I had lines wrapped around the corner. Whatever I made sold."

#### MOTHERS KNOW BEST

Donna Bell's head baker, Sandusky credits his culinary know-how to time shared behind the burner with both mom and grandma. "My grandmother was more of a cook, my mom liked to bake," he says. "At first I liked cooking a lot better than baking because baking is so precise, scientific and I was too lazy for all that. While everyone was watching football over the holidays, I was in the kitchen. Now I mix precise and experimental, depending on my mood."

For Perrette, the book of Donna Bell didn't close when she passed away because her best friends and "chosen"

Matthew Sandusky, left, Pauley Perrette and Darren Greenblatt at Donna Bell's Bake Shop.

Donna Bell Perrette with a baby goose



## Recipes for SUCCESS

Wow Mom and your guests with Donna Bell's signature sweet and savory recipes

### SOUTHERN PEACH MUFFIN

by Matthew Sandusky • (inspired by Donna Bell Perrette)

#### INGREDIENTS:

3 cups all-purpose flour	1/2 cup milk
1/2 cup light brown sugar	1/4 cup buttermilk
1/2 cup granulated sugar	1/4 cup sour cream
1 tablespoon baking powder	1 1/2 cups finely diced peaches (fresh or canned)
1 teaspoon baking soda	
1 teaspoon salt	

1/2 teaspoon clove
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon ginger
1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
3/4 cup melted unsalted butter
3 large eggs
1 tablespoon vanilla

#### For the streusel topping:

1 cup all purpose flour
3/4 cup dark brown sugar
1/2 tablespoon salt
3/4 cup cold unsalted butter (cut into small cubes)
1 tablespoon cinnamon

#### INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Sift flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt together into large mixing bowl. Add spices. Whisk in both brown and granulated sugars.
2. In separate bowl, beat eggs, vanilla, milk, buttermilk and sour cream together until well blended. Pour in cooled melted butter. Add diced peaches (reserve 12 pieces) into wet ingredients.
3. Slowly fold wet ingredients into dry being careful not to over-mix. Batter should be lumpy.
4. With ice cream scooper, fill cupcake tins lined with 2-inch by 1 1/4-inch baking cups. To make streusel topping, sift flour and salt together. Whisk in brown sugar and cinnamon. Add diced butter and cut with pastry knife or two forks until mealy. Sprinkle streusel onto muffin batter and top with peach slice.
5. Bake in preheated oven at 400 degrees for 10 minutes. Turn temp down to 350 degrees and bake another 15 minutes until done. Let cool for 10 minutes in tin, then remove to cooling rack or serve warm.



For another delectable recipe, see next page. ➡➡



**NCIS**  
 airs Tuesdays  
 at 8 p.m. ET/PT  
 on CBS.

Pauley posing  
 in front of her  
 wares.

# bliss // MAITRE D'

## PIMENTO, CHEDDAR & CHIVE DROP BISCUITS

by Matthew Sandusky  
 (inspired by Donna Bell Perrette)

### INGREDIENTS:

- 3 cups flour
- 3 teaspoons baking powder
- ¾ teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 2 teaspoon salt
- 2 cups buttermilk
- 1 cup (2 sticks) cold butter
- 1½ cups shredded cheddar  
 cheese
- 1 cup diced pimentos
- ½ cup fresh chives



### INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Heat oven to 450 degrees. Cut cold butter into tablespoon-sized pieces. Add to dry ingredients and, with a fork, work butter into flour until crumbly. Add pimentos, cheddar cheese and chives. Pour in buttermilk and work into mixture, being careful not to over-mix.
2. With large spoon, scoop ½-cup dough mounds and drop onto baking tray lined with parchment paper or nonstick spray. Bake at 450 degrees for 5 minutes and lower temperature to 350 degrees. Bake for another 10 minutes or until golden. Cool for 5 minutes and serve warm.

family created something that lets her live on.

“Donna Bell was a classic Southern belle who loved to cook and bake. I have many memories of my sister and me baking and decorating cakes with my mom,” says Perrette. “My best friend Darren loved coming to Alabama to spend time cooking and eating my mom’s Southern food, and he had the idea to open a Southern bake shop in her honor. Now we have this little piece of Southern goodness right off the heart of Times Square, in our old neighborhood.” — *Mona Buehler*

### EDITOR'S PICK



## KitchenAid Artisan Design Series 5-Quart Tilt-Head Stand Mixer

Brighten up your baking and your kitchen with KitchenAid’s new jewel-toned stand mixer in Raspberry Ice. Part of its “Cook for the Cure” line, proceeds go toward breast cancer research. (\$399.99, [kitchenaid.com](http://kitchenaid.com))