

Inez Ribustello got her start in the world of food and wine after moving to New York City from her home state of North Carolina. Though she grew up in the small town of Tarboro, and graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1998 with a degree in journalism and mass communications, her dream was to pursue a career in cooking. She chose New York's Institute of Culinary Education to get her started. There, she began to learn about wine, which inspired her to take a job at Best Cellars, the groundbreaking, mid-priced wine store on Manhattan's Upper East Side.

Her wine career took a huge leap forward when she became an Assistant Cellar Master at the renowned World Trade Center restaurant Windows on the World. In a very short time, she was promoted to Beverage Director, putting her in the position as wine buyer for the largest grossing restaurant in North America. It was here where she met her now-husband, Stephen.

The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 impacted her both personally and professionally. Having lost friends, colleagues and her job in the bombing, she had to face her future. She chose to throw herself into her work and took the position of Beverage Director for Blue Fin Restaurant in the W Hotel-Times Square. At Blue Fin, she created a 500-label wine list, including more than 50 wines by the glass, and developed a cocktail list that received rave reviews from New York magazine.

Having conquered New York, her next move was to return to her hometown with her fiancé. Together they decided to open their own restaurant, wine bar and retail store called On the Square. The wine list at On the Square holds the prestigious Best of Award of Excellence from Wine Spectator.

Inspired by Best Cellars, they created a user-friendly, non-intimidating wine list, which was well received by people and press in the eastern North Carolina region. Stephen and Inez oversee every aspect of their restaurant while raising their 2 children; an 11-year old daughter named Cynthia and an eight-year-old son named Stephen.

In 2009, Inez placed 2nd runner-up in the Best Sommelier in America competition held in New York City. She is a member of the Alumni Hall of Fame for the Institute of Culinary Education and a graduate of the Court of Master Sommelier's Advanced Exam. She and Stephen are the only married couple in the world to have passed the Advanced Exam.

Their next big venture is Tarboro Brewing Company, a microbrewery that started brewing in February of 2016. When Inez is not at work or with her children, she is updating her blog InezSays as well as writing her memoir, [Life After Windows](#).