





## A Woman's Kitchen is Her Castle Shawnee Native Comes Home to Build Her Business

In 1990, Santa received an odd request from a little girl in Shawnee, Kansas. She wanted a cookbook. Santa complied, and on Christmas morning, 10-year-old Ann Renée Neighbors unwrapped a Precious Moments cookbook—and her future.

Ann's childhood hobby matured into a full-fledged career, taking her first to the Art Institute of Houston, where she earned a culinary arts degree, graduating with honors. Ann then collected significant experience at prestigious resorts and country clubs across the country the way some chefs collect recipes, before setting off across Napa Valley and Europe to build her regional wine knowledge.

Ann's culinary journey landed her on the steps of a stone castle in a most unlikely location. It isn't part of England's vast countryside or a relic of European

medieval architecture. This castle is in her hometown, Shawnee, Kansas.

For Ann, it was the perfect setting for her catering and private event dining business.

### Rescuing a Castle

Built by Remigius Achille Caenen in 1905, Caenen Castle is modeled after Chateau Chavaniac in Chavaniac, France, the birthplace of Major General Gilbert Motier, Marquis de Lafayette.

Sadly, when Ann first toured the historic castle at 12401 Johnson Drive, it no longer reflected its grand architectural lineage. After a fire in the early 1970s, the interior needed a complete gutting. Last year Ann and her parents became the castle's new owners.

**"We are in the business of catering to the person, as well as the event—from the doorman to dessert, we infuse each detail with the host's personality."**

- Chef Ann Renée Neighbors

Roger and Nancy own Neighbors Construction, a general contractor based in Edwardsville, Kan. In four months, the entire Neighbors family, including Ann's brothers, Ryan and Aaron, turned Caenen Castle into the metropolitan area's newest catering and upscale private event dining experience. Dubbed Renée Kelly's at Caenen Castle, the establishment carries Ann's middle name and Nancy's maiden name.

### The Renée Kelly Experience

"We are in the business of catering to the person, as well as the event," said Ann. "From the doorman to dessert, we infuse each detail with the host's personality."

Known for her versatility, Chef Ann tailors each menu to the client's culinary palette, complementing each course with a personally selected label from Renée Kelly's extensive wine collection. Clients select the music and can dictate if servers should dress in costume to carry out an event's theme.

Stepping through the threshold, guests are enveloped in old world European décor and charm. Only the sumptuous tapestries that drape the 22-foot-tall stone walls rival the tapestry of flavors woven into each personal menu. Three stately hand-carved European fireplaces anchor the dining area, beckoning guests to linger longer on wintry evenings. A grand staircase rises from wide oak plank flooring, connecting patrons to the mezzanine. Guests may dine on old English trestle tables while seated on majestic high-back tapestry chairs—or they can enjoy their feast in the barrel-ceiling wine cellar.

Renée Kelly's at Caenen Castle accommodates private parties of 20 to 100 and is open to the public on Easter, Mother's Day, Father's Day, St. Patrick's Day and during Oktoberfest. Public reservations are made European style, with specific seating times and set menus.



### About Chef Ann Renée Neighbors

- Full-time internship training in classical French cuisine at The River Oaks Country Club, Houston, TX
- Stage' The Sagamore Resort, N. Y.
- Balsams Grand Resort & Hotel, Dixville Notch, N.H.
- Sea Pines Resort, N.C.
- Member and certified culinarian, American Culinary Federation
- Member, American Institute of Wine and Food

### Retreat to Renée Kelly's at Caenen Castle for your special occasion:

- Client dinners
- Company events
- Top-performer banquets
- Business or civic group luncheons
- Weddings and receptions
- Rehearsal dinners
- Post-wedding brunches
- Showers
- Engagements
- High teas
- Baptisms, christenings or first communions
- Birthdays
- Anniversaries

### Renée Kelly's at Caenen Castle

12401 Johnson Drive  
Shawnee, Kansas

- Lease by the hour or by the event
- Tuesday through Sunday, 7 a.m. to 1 a.m.
- Proper attire is required.
- For reservations, call 913.631.4100 or visit [www.reneekellys.com](http://www.reneekellys.com).

*Directions: Located just one and one-half miles west of I-35 on Johnson Drive or two miles east of I-435.*