

# TASTE *of the* BAY™

A CULTURAL GUIDE TO THE AREA'S BEST

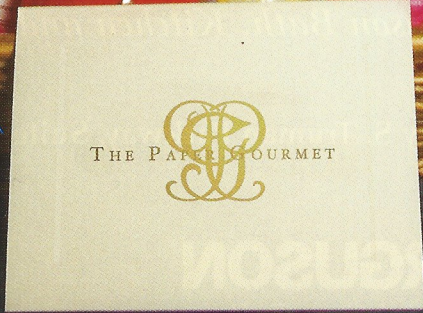
The Best  
*Holiday Recipes*  
From Locals

**NO-PANIC**  
Holiday  
Preparation  
Tips

## The Paper Gourmet

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**IN COMING!**  
*Waterfowl Winter*  
on the Bay



**WIN!**  
Lights On The  
Bay Tickets  
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# The Paper Gourmet:

## MORE THAN NOTE-WORTHY

*Annapolis store has caused stir in the stationery business for nearly five years*

By Marie Robinson • Photos By Steve Buchanan

**G**eorge Bernard Shaw once said, "My method is to take the utmost trouble to find the right thing to say, and then say it with the utmost levity." Shaw would have been happy to know Elizabeth Johnson, who in the age of email, makes her living providing stationery worthy of messages that people put time and thought into. Her goal: to cultivate a business that is like no other business in Annapolis—a place where you can walk in, receive personal customer service, find the perfect invitation and gifts that you can't find in any other store. When you care enough to go beyond Hallmark, her store, The Paper Gourmet, is what you're looking for.

Entering the store, you're greeted by the loveliest scent. It's not overpowering or unduly perfumy; it's just...the perfect welcome. Coming from a candle display just inside the front door, it's a lovely introduction to this refreshing Annapolis business.

Once inside, you'll quickly find an entire wall devoted to

invitations for every kind of gathering you can imagine. Birthdays, anniversaries, weddings, bridal showers, save the dates, baby showers, children's parties, birth announcements, corporate events, cocktail parties, holidays and more. There are invitations that you can have printed right there at the store, others that you can print yourself with your home computer and others that you can hand write for that personal touch. "Customers will come in, take a look at the wall of invitations and feel inspired to have an impromptu party" Johnson says. On the opposite wall, there are shelves filled with boxed notes of all different colors, designs, shapes and sizes. Perfect for a thank you note, personal note to a friend or something beautiful to use just because. If it's stationery you're looking for, you've come to the right place.

If you move down the wall a little further you'll come to a section of greeting cards for all occasions and just past that a small area dedicated to what Johnson says "is my favorite

**“We’re more than just a card store — we have a lot of everything. It’s a great store if you need a quick gift or just want to look at pretty stuff!”**

part of the store,” the handmade cards from all over the country. These cards aren’t just your everyday run of the mill cards, Johnson explained, each one is handmade and signed by the artist. “I have customers come in just for this section of cards alone,” Johnson states.

In the back of the store, a big, country-style wooden table provides space for spreading out books full of thousands of sample invitations and personalized stationery options. Customers can choose from a variety of papers, ink colors, typestyles, designs and print methods. Friendly and knowledgeable staff encourages visitors to sit down, relax and enjoy going through a vast library of invitations of their choice. They are on hand to help with wording, advice and suggestions. “Wedding invitations and birth announcements are our most popular items with customers” Johnson said.

### More than just a stationery store...

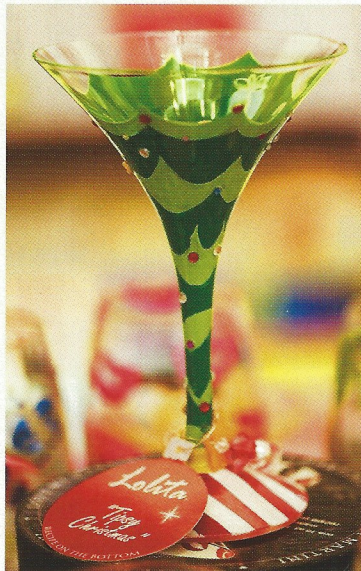
A former corporate event planner, Elizabeth Johnson is no stranger to big affairs and all the fine touches and attention to detail that invitations require to pull them off with style. Her store, The Paper Gourmet, is a smorgasbord of specialized stationery and unique gifts that puts the excitement back into finding the perfect item for that special event coming up.

In fact, it’s the kind of place where it’s easy to spend an hour browsing through. Located on Bay Ridge Road, the store continues to awe its customers with its ever-changing inventory. A great place to quickly find a birthday, hostess or house-warming gift, The Paper Gourmet is chock-full of all sorts of hand-picked items that Johnson takes pride in selecting herself.

Scented candles? Fancy soaps? Baby shower gifts? Elegant frames?

It’s all available, along with fun wedding-type items such as packets of tissues for the mother-of-the-bride, and customizable items like bulletin boards that you can have personalized with your name or initials. “I love coming to work,” Johnson laughed, talking about the passion she has for her business. “It’s like being a kid in a candy store.”

Having worked at MCI for 10 years, Johnson set out to



build a business on her own terms. “The opportunity to buy this business came up and I thought I would like to do that; it’s very feminine and event planner related,” she explained.

While invitations and stationery are the cornerstones of this business, there is much more to be found there. A kids’ corner, filled with gifts for infants and children, promises to evoke responses like “Awwwww... How adorable... Where did you find this?” from grateful parents. Reminding you of how fun it is to be a child, the area includes brightly colored picture frames, bookends, oh-so-cute T-shirts and onesies, local artwork, puzzles, stuffed animals, cute stools, first year books and more.

Various tables throughout the store display additional distinctive items suitable for a girlfriend, mom or that special person in your life. Hand-painted glasses, custom photo albums and guest books, creative soaps in the shape of initials, monogrammed bags, seasonal paper plates and napkins, take out menu boxes great for a house warming gift and the list goes on.

With the holidays soon approaching, when asked what items her customers like the most, Johnson said, “photo cards, custom stationery made for their kids or family members and hand painted holiday pillows which are becoming collector’s items—the artist designs different ones every year that are absolutely fantastic.” She also said they’ll be plenty of festive gifts for everyone on your list and then Johnson smiled, “I know it’s crazy but we also carry holiday toilet paper which is hilarious and another hot seller.”

Breaking into a grin, Jessie Battista, a Paper Gourmet employee of one year, could barely contain her enthusiasm. “I love it here!” she said. “It’s fun to interact with the customers, and I just love the merchandise.”

“We’re more than just a card store — we have a lot of everything. It’s a great store if you need a quick gift or just want to look at pretty stuff!”

The Paper Gourmet is just that, yet so much more. They have a passion for parties and gifts that will satisfy your appetite for paper products — from stationery, invitations, cards, plates, napkins and gift wrap — to a haven of gifts for all occasions. ~

Visit **The Paper Gourmet** at 914 Bay Ridge Road, Annapolis, call **410-263-8710** for more information, or email at **thepapergourmet@earthlink.net**. Hours: M-F 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m., Sat. 10 a.m. - 5 p.m., and Sun. 12 p.m. - 4p.m.