

Mixology queen

Costco member is rising “star of the bar”

member profile

Member name:

Patricia Richards

Member at:

Henderson, Nevada

Member since: 2005

Occupation:

Director of mixology,
Wynn/Encore Las Vegas

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Las Vegas, Nevada 89109

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Comments about Costco:

“I like to look for great deals on wines. Basically anything in bulk that will save me money over the year is what I load up on. Occasionally I splurge on your fresh-cut flowers also!”



FINLANDIA VODKA WORLDWIDE

Patricia Richards competed in the 2010 International Finlandia Vodka Cup competition, held in an ice dome in northern Finland.

taining one of the ingredients (Darbo Elderflower Syrup) in transit and having her fresh strawberry garnish freeze onto the ice-slab bar, Richards placed fourth, the highest American finish in the event's 12-year history.

The Vodka Cup was the Arctic icing on Richards' prestigious career. However, her road to mixology queen was indeed mixed.

Richards grew up in Jasper, Alberta. When she was 4, the Canadian courts deemed her mother, a schizophrenia sufferer, unfit to raise her children. Richards and her baby brother were placed in foster care. For the next 14 years, Richards continually tried to impress her German immigrant foster parents, hoping to win their love and affection.

“As a child, you know early on that something is different. You want to fit in and be like other kids, but you realize you're not like every other kid,” Richards tells *The Connection*. “As a child you are vulnerable to that, trying to find out who you are.”

It would be several years before Richards figured out who she was. She found refuge in the kitchen, expressing her creativity with food. She attended culinary school at the Vancouver Community College and worked as a line cook and as a waiter in Vancouver, Toronto and Los Angeles.

In 2002, the Los Angeles Four Seasons hotel promoted her to bartender and she found her calling. The first drink she made as a licensed bartender was a Cosmopolitan. These days she invents cocktails, such as the Sinatra Smash, a fusion of Gentleman Jack whiskey, cassis and blackberries, that are picked up by bartenders across the country.

Richards was recruited to Las Vegas' MGM Grand to work as the specialty room bartender at

By Fred Minnick

WHAT DO YOU TAKE on a trip to the Arctic Circle? When Costco member Patricia Richards traveled there in February (yes, February), she went prepared: cold-weather boots, multilayered pants, heavy coat, hats, gloves and a cocktail shaker.

That's right, a cocktail shaker.

Richards, who is director of mixology for Wynn Las Vegas and Encore, was at the Snow Village in Levi, Finland, to compete in the 2010 International Finlandia Vodka Cup against 31 of the world's best mixologists.

Mixologists are high-end creative cocktail crafters who understand spirits better than the average beer-slinging bartender. A bartender can pour a drink or read a recipe, but a mixologist invents recipes and can match your flavor desires with a cocktail that you may have never considered. The Finlandia Vodka Cup is considered their Olympics, and Richards was the lone Yankee competing.

With 40 international media members surrounding her, Richards prepared her creation—Nirvana Sour-Aperitif made with Finlandia Grapefruit Vodka. Despite breaking the bottle con-

FRED MINNICK PHOTOGRAPHY

The Costco Connection

Costco members will find blenders, as well as cocktail ingredients (including alcohol where available) at their local Costco.

Fiamma Trattoria in 2003. Her skills and work ethic caught the attention of the city's casino and resort executives, and in 2005 she was hired by the Wynn.

As the first woman to hold an executive-level mixology position in Las Vegas, Richards creates or approves every cocktail on every Wynn Las Vegas and Encore menu. She manages millions of dollars in liquor inventory. She's also the face of Wynn's international beverage presence, competing in cocktail

competitions and frequently judging contests.

"I was definitely promoted over the boys. There were challenges going from a line employee to senior management," she says. But she won her staff's trust working 60 to 80 hours a week and her customers' palates with divine seasonal cocktails.

"I try to do unique flavor combinations. If somebody wants a coffee drink, I might do something with the Starbucks Coffee Liqueur, espresso, half-and-half; serve over ice with a

little dark chocolate and cinnamon in it; and call it Iced Mayan Chocolate Café," Richards says. "I see food menus and look for the hot, trendy flavors out there. I'll try to match those flavors using fresh, high-quality ingredients."

Richards can match a customer's taste desires with an innovative cocktail on the fly. Ask for something refreshing and she'll offer her signature Cucumber & Ginger Cooler.

"People come here year-round asking for that cocktail," Richards says. "We've had people stay at the Wynn just because they love our cocktails."

In less than a decade, Richards has become one of the most respected women in the hospitality industry. She received the 2008 *Cheers* magazine Rising Star Award and in 2009 was named on *Travel + Leisure's* "World's Best Hotel Bartenders" list.

"Young women come up to me and say, 'I want to be just like you.' That's an honor to have people say that," Richards says. "But I know I have a long way to go. I'm just trying to learn something new every day." ☐

Fred Minnick is a writer and photographer who covers food, wine and spirits for various national magazines.

Patricia Richards' cocktails

Cucumber & Ginger Cooler

1½ inches of thinly sliced English cucumber (you may use a mandoline for this)

½ oz. freshly squeezed lime juice

1 oz. Hendrick's gin

1 oz. Canton Ginger Liqueur

½ oz. agave syrup

4 oz. club soda

In the mixing glass part of a Boston cocktail shaker, muddle the cucumber with the lime juice. Add the gin, ginger liqueur and agave syrup. Fill the mixing tin part of the shaker two-thirds full of cubed ice and shake ingredients well to chill and combine. Pour contents of tin into a tall pilsner glass. Top with club soda and gently stir to combine. Add additional ice as needed. Garnish and serve.

Garnish: A beautiful mint sprig.

Pomegranate Margarita

1½ oz. Patrón Silver Tequila

¾ oz. Cointreau

1½ oz. Kirkland Signature™ Premium Margarita Cocktail Mix

1½ oz. POM pomegranate juice

½ oz. freshly squeezed lime juice

¼ oz. agave syrup

Place all of the ingredients in the mixing glass part of a Boston cocktail shaker. Fill the mixing tin part of the shaker two-thirds full of cubed ice and shake ingredients well to chill and combine. Strain over fresh ice into a 12-oz. highball glass. Garnish and serve.

Garnish: Prop a lime wheel on the rim of the glass.

Buyer's pick

Shannon Axthelm
Small Electrics Buyer



TOM PINTO

bowl (5.5 quarts) with a comfort-grip handle and more watts (575 watts).

There are kitchen appliances you use occasionally and then store away. This mixer, the only stand mixer Costco sells, is so versatile you'll want it out all the time.

With various attachments you can make pizza dough, pasta, sausages, ice cream and so much more, and it's easy to clean.

The KitchenAid mixer comes in Contour Silver, Empire Red and Onyx Black, and includes dough hook, flat beater and stainless steel wire whip attachments.

Whatever your family tradition, the KitchenAid mixer will help you pass it down—and start it up a batch or two. By the way, my grandma's still using hers. ☐



I LOVE FAMILY TRADITION. I remember sitting in my grandmother's kitchen, watching make batches of pie dough homemade ice cream. And it was always done using a KitchenAid mixer, so of course when I grew up I had to have my own. It's my favorite kitchen appliance, and I hear that all the time from Costco members.

Costco has a new model coming in that has a larger

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