



Melba Wilson was “born, bred and buttered in Harlem.” Today she proudly represents her New York neighborhood as one of the most successful African-American women in the restaurant and catering businesses. Her achievements are countless and her reputation in the food service industry is stellar. Her style, poise and love of entertaining have made Melba’s Restaurant a New York landmark frequented by music, TV and movie stars, New York City’s elite, locals and travelers from around the world.

Melba’s drive to succeed started at an early age with a sharp eye and impeccable insight. Her first opportunity to learn about the restaurant business was at Harlem’s famous Sylvia’s Restaurant, where she held a variety of service and managerial positions. It was Melba who conceptualized and launched the popular Sunday Gospel Brunch, which was so successful that the restaurant industry’s elite quickly came calling.

Michael Lomanco, former Executive Chef of 21 Club and Executive Chef of Windows on the World Restaurant contacted Melba in 1999 to produce and manage a weekly Sunday brunch. In less than six months the Champagne Gospel Brunch generated a sixty-five percent increase in revenue. This experience combined with her ability to organize, produce and execute promotional events led to partnerships with renowned restaurateurs, Drew Nieporent and Robert DeNiro of the Tribeca Grill and the Nobu empire, as well as the late Artie Cutler and Godfrey Polistina of Carmine’s, Virgil’s, and Quest Restaurants.

In 2004, Melba decided to strike out on her own. Today she is the proud sole owner of three businesses: Melba’s Restaurant, Melba’s Catering and Melba’s in Central Park. Melba’s has received rave reviews from New York Magazine, Time Out, The New Yorker, The Daily News, Zagat and Interview Magazine. The restaurant was also named Best Brunch for Kids by Time Out New York, Best Soul Food by Zagat and New York.com and has featured recipes in the “Go Green East Harlem” Cookbook as well as “Bobby Flay’s Throwdown” cookbook.

Melba's Catering has an extensive list of clientele including Target, Nike, American Express, Pfizer, Time Warner, Bank of America, NFL, NBA, Transport Workers Union, Universal Records, The Archdiocese of New York and several recording artists including DJ Khaled, Jay-Z, the Zac Brown Band and Katy Perry. Most recently the Duke and Duchess of Sussex; Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, visited Melba's Restaurant during their trip to New York City. Other celebrity guests at Melba's include Zendaya, Tom Holland, Michael Strahan, Sherri Shepherd and Nick Cannon.

Melba appears regularly on national news and talk shows such as Live with Kelly and Ryan, Good Morning America, 60 Minutes, The View, The Today Show, CBS Mornings and Good Day New York. She is currently a judge on OWN's The Great Soul Food Cook-Off, Cook at all Costs and has been a guest judge on Food Network's Beat Bobby Flay, Worst Cooks in America and Savoring Harlem (which Melba narrated) and The Best Thing I Ever Ate. Melba is featured in the documentary Love, Lust and Comfort Food on the Sundance Channel and is highlighted in the upcoming documentary Turning Tables which premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival.

Designer Isaac Mizrahi handpicked Melba as one of his Favorite ladies to represent his Liz Claiborne line in a series of national advertisements entitled, REAL Women.

The proud mother of a 19 year-old son, Melba has a cookbook published by Simon & Schuster and was honored twice by Ebony Magazine with their Taste of Ebony Award. Melba is the recipient of the South Beach Wine and Food Festival, Westside Spirit Award, The Entrepreneur Award, The Greater Harlem Chamber of Commerce Award, The Thurgood Marshall Prestige Award, The "Shero Award" and the Heritage Award, to name a few. Melba was also recently honored by the AKA Sorority, Google, Chase, inducted into Crain's 2021 Hall of Fame and named one of Crain's 50 Most Influential Women of 2021. She is the first female and first person of color to be elected as President of the NYC Hospitality Alliance. Melba is a member of the Board of Directors of City Harvest, Opportunity Charter School, NYC & Company and God's Love We Deliver. Melba donates to and supports many causes including Alzheimer's, The Girl Scouts of America, NY Women's Foundation, The Doe Fund, The Harlem Community Fridge and several senior citizens causes. She has consistently taken time to help community-based organizations in Harlem and throughout New York City. Melba is a partner at the newly relaunched Wollman Rink in the heart of Central Park, serves on the board of City Harvest, God's Love We Deliver, NYC & Co., as well as co-chair of Mayor Eric Adams Covid Recovery Roundtable.

Melba's celebrates 17 years in business and has served over 6 million meals.