



When Vince and I were dating, he used to love to tell me all about Beaufort. One of Beaufort's claims to fame (that he repeated *way* more than once) was that *The Great Santini* had been filmed here. "You know, from Pat Conroy's book. He's

*Conrack*

. He's the guy who wrote

*The Lords of Discipline*

."

After we were married, screening our VHS copy of *The Great Santini* was one of our favorite things to do with guests who had never visited Beaufort before. We'd all watch the movie and then Vince and I would take everyone downtown and show them the sites they had just seen on our television. Pat Conroy was our local star and we were mighty proud of him!

Almost all of my Pat Conroy experiences have been food related. Years and years ago, when I worked at First Presbyterian Church, I was introduced to Pat by our mutual friend, Julia Randel. After gathering up enough courage to speak, I think the first thing that I ever said to Pat was something along the lines of, "Would you like a meatball?" I was passing a tray of them (MY recipe, of course) at a funeral reception. Sad but true, for many years my Pat Conroy encounters continued to be at funerals, the occasional buggy pass at Publix or across a crowded restaurant.

Happily for me, in recent years I've been the caterer for a number of events where Pat and his wife Cassandra King have been guests. This past February, at a Beaufort International Film Festival event, I was able to give Pat a copy of my most recent cookbook, *Celebrate Everything!*

At our next meeting, the very next evening, he completely flattered me by telling me that he had read my book “cover to cover” and then asked me about a couple of the recipes. I was overwhelmed. It's true. Pat Conroy is an honest-and-for-true total foodie.

So in June, when Mina Truong asked me to cater a customer appreciation party for Mina



and Conroy, the fitness studio that she and Pat share, I was thrilled! “Let's do a tapas party,” I said. Mina heartily agreed. We all had such a good time! It's so much fun to cook for people who genuinely love food. My goal for the evening was to prepare small, low-carb dishes. We served a total of eight tapas for about twenty-five guests. I'm sharing recipes for four of the small plates along with photos from our evening together.

Beaufort is celebrating the birthday of our friend, Pat Conroy, this weekend. I hope to see y'all at the Pat Conroy at 70 Festival. I'm very happy to be catering the reception following the screening of, you guessed it, *The Great Santini* on Thursday night. Vince and I still have our VHS copy. Isn't it funny how things work out sometimes? Happy Birthday, Pat!



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Pat Conroy's Chicken Tanga. Photo by Pat Conroy. <https://www.facebook.com/patconroy/>



Raspberry Cheesecake Popsicles. Photo by Pat Conroy. <https://www.facebook.com/patconroy/>