

Q&A with Pam Mariutto, Founder BellaPamella and BellaPamella.com

Q: What inspired you to start BellaPamella?

I'm a mom of three fantastic kids. And I'm a career mom. So, for years while I was raising kids, I was also running off to the office. By the time I'd scoop them all up from day-care or school and get home, I was exhausted and I had to face dinner. I really wanted one of those old style aprons. I figured, if I had one of those, I could put it on when I came through the door and somehow I would be transformed into a "real" mom!

Q: Life is chaotic. How does an apron help?

Let's talk about being a mom. So much of it is psychological. If you allow yourself to think about it, you can get so stressed out. But when you are in the right frame of mind, you feel confident, you are a rock for your kids. They talk about the mama bear instinct. Being a mom gives a woman incredible powers, if she just trusts herself. As goofy as it may sound, a beautifully fitting apron could be seen as a uniform for this awesome task. (And it doesn't hurt that the aprons are so flattering they make you feel like a million bucks! ;)

Q: Where do you get your fabrics?

When I started out, I purchased large quantities of print fabrics that were being sold primarily to quilt shops. But those prints change, and so it was a bit of a moving target to get what was needed. Now we've added printing the fabric. And that completely improved the process. We don't have to depend on what fabrics others are designing; we can design what we need.

Q: Do you sew the aprons yourself?

I design and make the prototypes for all the products. The sewing is done by sewers here in Minnesota.

Q: What makes BellaPamella aprons special?

The inspiration was the apron you wish you would find at an antique shop: A vintage apron, (in perfect condition), in an old fashioned print that fits like a glove. The reason you never find them is that those old style aprons were custom sized and made by the women who wore them. Many have darts. So, when you do find these aprons, often they are sized quite oddly.

This explains the popular influx of the butcher (or Bar-B-Q style) apron. They fit lots of people because they really just hang off the front, with ties in back. My challenge was to design something that looked just like what you WISH you would find in an antique shop, but with enough versatility to fit a wide range of people. BellaPamella aprons are just that. I looked at how to use the details that made those sweet old aprons so wonderful, but designed them in ways to assure the apron would fit you, no matter your size or shape.

Q: How do people justify an apron that costs \$45.00?

On close inspection of a BellaPamella apron, the quality is obvious. There are no surged seams, nor are there any raw edges inside or out. Perhaps more importantly, go out to dinner one night and you will most likely spend more than the cost of a BellaPamella apron. But if you buy the apron, it will make you feel fabulous about cooking many, many meals at home! It's just economical!

Q: What's up with the light bulb on the website home page?

Since BellaPamella aprons are all about using a little creativity to help moms be moms, it seemed natural that we could help in other ways. So if you click on the light bulb you go to what I like to call the "Never-ending-list-of-very-BellaPamella-ideas"!

Q: What's the "Never-Ending-List-of-very-BellaPamella-Ideas"?

It's like a blog, but numbered as an idea list. I contribute creative solutions to typical household conundrums. When you're raising a family it really does get stressful. I always found that if I approached a problem with a little creativity it not only solved the problem, but also turned something stressful into something very rewarding. It's all about embracing the chaos! And finding a creative way out of it.

Q: Where do you get your ideas?

This is the beauty of this business, because I live it. Every idea on the blog is something I did with my own family. The cherry fabric I designed was one I had in my head but couldn't find. So were the aprons.

Q: How's business?

I'm thinking there are a lot of women out there like me! Of course moms aren't my only audience. I've seen photos of twenty-somethings with tattoos wearing BellaPamella aprons. I also have a young following in Japan. And we've filled orders all over the world including, Japan, Australia, Guam, France, ...

Q: You've been featured in several regional & national publications. Tell

us about it.

It's very exciting. A BellaPamella apron was featured as one of Rachel Rae's favorites. It was the Ruby Dot "Eunice". We had intended them for Valentines Day and the magazine came out in January. By the end of January the aprons were completely sold out and we were collecting emails of people who wanted one when the next batch was made! That was my first experience in printing fabric. We printed more fabric and made more aprons. There's no question we would have sold lots more if we'd had them to sell in the first place. But it did indicate to me that this [Eunice in Ruby Dot] apron was a popular one, so we still make it.

Q: Where will the business go from here?

BellaPamella the brand stands for doing a creative end-run on the everyday stress and chaos of running a home. It starts with an apron, the perfect "Domestic Goddess" uniform that will enable moms to tackle tall 'piles' in a single bound. Being a mom is hard. BellaPamella is all about embracing the good parts and the hard parts. All of it. And using creativity, and maybe a little sense of humor to help you survive. To that end, any beautifully designed product that helps a mom do her thing in style could be a BellaPamella brand product. In the future, look here for the perfect organizers, the perfect list pads, the perfect you-fill-in-the-blank to make running a home the joy it was always SUPPOSED to be!