

FOOD ARTS

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WOMEN CHEFS:
ROLE MODELS FOR THE '90s

CORN IS HIGH
WINE LIST TRENDS

BOSTON DAMES GO PRO

Earlier this year, Boston's Les Dames des Amis d'Escoffier switched its allegiance and went pro, then celebrated the rite of passage with a dinner cooked by six top women chefs.

Marilyn Myers reports.

Necessity—the mother of invention—gave birth to the Boston chapter of Les Dames des Amis d'Escoffier 33 years ago. Only men were allowed to join the Boston chapter of Les Amis d'Escoffier, and only men were invited as guests. (This is still the case today.)

So the Boston women established their own society—complete with dinners, fund-raising events and a foundation for the financial support of culinary students.

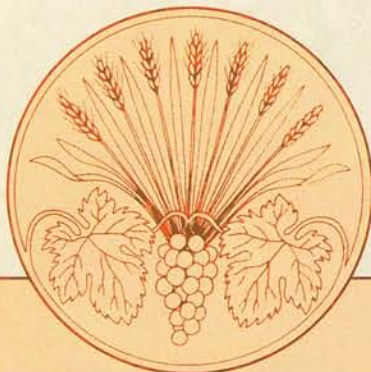
But while the original group of women was passionately interested in food, few were involved with it professionally. “We had lawyers and accountants, which actually worked to our advantage because they would do our legal work and accounting for a pittance,” says **Lucille Giovino**, who has been president for the last four years. “Because our expenses were minimal and because we usually had two fund-raisers a year, we raised a lot of money for culinary students who needed financial aid.”

But times change.

Now the Boston chapter has switched allegiance and become the eighth chapter of the international organization Les Dames d'Escoffier. With this shift, criteria for membership will now be based on working experience within some aspect of the food industry.

The transition didn't come without some collective soul-searching, however. And to sweeten the palatability of the change, the current non-professional members have been “grandmothered” into the new group.

MENU of the MOMENT



Les Dames d'Escoffier

Boston

Thirty-third Annual Gala Dinner
honoring

Grande Dame Julia Child

Maison Robert
March 30, 1992

Hors d'oeuvres

Veuve Clicquot n.v. brut Champagne



Cool vermicelli with five salads

*Louis Latour Grand Ardèche
Chardonnay 1989*



Rabbit pâté with cranberry pear tart

*Louis Metaireau Muscadet Sur Lie
Cuvée de Prestige 1988*



Fennel - scented fish quenelles with
asparagus and tomato saffron butter

Azienda Puiatti Pinot Bianco 1990



Rack of lamb with its kidney

*Cain Cellars Cain Five
Napa Valley 1987*



Fourme d'Ambert and pear tart



Nougatine basket with mint ice cream*

*Domaine des Baumard Coteaux du
Layon Clos de Ste.-Catherine 1983*

*see RECIPE FILE

“We could see that our aims and goals were the same as Les Dames d'Escoffier,” Giovino explains, “to foster the fine art of dining, provide good educational opportunities and raise funds for students pursuing the culinary arts. The pros definitely outweighed the cons, but we wanted to be able to keep the women who are so beneficial to our fund-raising.”

To celebrate the birth of this next generation, the group's 33rd annual gala dinner, held in March at **Maison Robert** in Boston's Old City Hall, was prepared and presented by six women representing four of the area's most-noted restaurants. Giovino says this event was the first time the annual dinner had been prepared solely by women chefs.

Johanne Killeen, chef/co-owner of **Al Forno** in Providence, kicked off the six-course dinner with a spiral of cool vermicelli surrounded by five salads, a presentation each diner could toss and combine as the mood suited.

Andrée Robert, head chef at **Maison Robert**, served rabbit pâté with a cranberry pear tart and, later in the meal, as the cheese course, a tart of Fourme d'Ambert and pear. Her mother, **Ann Robert**, chaired the event and commented on the wines as each was served.

The fennel-scented fish quenelles were created by **Jody Adams**, executive chef at **Michela's** in Cambridge. Steamed in hotel pans for easy transporting, the quenelles were then cut into the signature squares of the **Michela's** logo.

Lydia Shire and **Susan Regis** teamed up (as they do daily as owner and chef at Boston's **Biba**) to offer rack of lamb with its kidney, dramatically served with a splash of gold leaf on the plate.

For dessert, **Lee Napoli**—**Maison Robert's** pastry chef—presented a tour de force nougatine basket with mint ice cream surrounded by threads of caramelized sugar. This glorious and complex dessert was sent to the table with a round of applause from all the women in the kitchen. And they, in turn, were given a rousing hand by those at the table when the meal ended and **Julia Child** was honored as the grand dame of the evening. ■