

CORNUCOPIA



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A Message From The President



Dear Members,

I hope everyone and their families are staying safe and healthy during these crazy times.

2020 will be a year everyone will remember and hopefully never have to repeat again. It all started on March 20th with the closing of the Société Culinaire Philanthropique following Governor Cuomo's Executive Order to close down all New York City offices. In accordance with Phase II of New York City's reopening plan, we were allowed to return to the office on June 22nd. Our office manager, Diane Capuano, was able to work remotely from home and maintain most of the necessary office functions.

The Culinarians' Home was locked down in early March ensuring the safety of the residents by preventing outside visitors. Our administrator, Terry Newman, and his staff did a wonderful job of maintaining the Home and ensuring the well-being of our residents. Great job everyone! The decision to cancel the 2020 Culinarians' Home Picnic was made in May due to the uncertainty of COVID-19's projected timeline. To err on the side of caution, we believed it was best to cancel early to prioritize the safety and health of all of our members, family, and guests. We hope to be back in full force for 2021.

The Société's annual dinner dance which was scheduled to have taken place at the New York Yale Club on April 26th was postponed to 2021. Hopefully, reopenings will go as planned and we will be able to return next year.

During this time, the Société was able to integrate Zoom for remote member meetings. We found this platform to be useful and comforting as we could see many of our members throughout the country. Even though nothing replaces in-person meetings at our welcoming office, it was definitely better than having none at all. The consensus is that we will continue our general meetings through Zoom as we have found that more members throughout the country could now attend and provide input.

In response to recent economic hardships that have impacted members of our community, a decision was made by the Board of Trustees to provide financial help to all of our active members through the Jules Weber Foundation. We really appreciate the warm response we received from those who responded. Thank you again to the trustees for this generous decision.

To all our members and family, please stay safe and healthy so that we can meet once again in happier times.

Le Best Chef Competition Postponed

By Sebastien Baud

*Executive Chef Consulate General of France in
New York*

*President Delegate Academie Culinaire de
France / US & Canada*

Due to concerns related to the Coronavirus pandemic and after close consultation with the ACF board members, we've made the difficult decision to postpone Le Best Chef Competition which was initially scheduled for April 18, 2020.

The health and safety of our competitors, staff, jury, partners and our guests is our only priority. Having worked on this project for a year and a half our main purpose has been to provide young chefs a venue to compete in the United States, promoting their talents and French gastronomy. This is obviously a difficult decision to make, but we will have to wait until we can provide safety for everyone. It has been a long road to prepare, organize, gather and promote this fantastic event in all details and we are ready to launch it when the time is right.

We are following the evolution of the situation closely and will announce a new date as soon as one is favorable. We look forward to showcasing new talent and French gastronomy. Please visit our website, www.lebestchefcompetition.com.

I personally would like to thank all our partners, competitors and jurors for their understanding and their support during this complicated period. Our thoughts go out to each of you and your families, at this time of great stress and uncertainty. Competition organizers; L'Académie Culinaire de France, the French Ministry of Agriculture, and the Maitres Cuisiniers de France.

Restaurant Latour in Ridgewood, New Jersey

By Michael Latour



Initially when the COVID-19 crisis impacted Latour Restaurant in Ridgewood, NJ, it became quite difficult to prepare a financial plan and strategize to preserve our business. First and foremost, we all were concerned for our health and well-being so we took the necessary precautions.

Basically, from a business perspective it was important to prioritize expenses and inform purveyors that they would eventually get paid, but in the interim they would have to accept small payments in good faith. The difficult problem was of course the lease. Depending on how your lease is signed can give you some leverage in terms of negotiations. I was fortunate to have a corporate signature therefore the security agreement was in my favor in the event of a default. So, I was able to reduce my rent for a three-month period.

In June, the outdoor café permit process began which was an arduous task. Our town required explicit instructions and guidelines to follow. We needed a separate insurance policy, architectural plans for seating and indemnification for the Village of Ridgewood, not to mention pay a café license fee. Finally, I opened the outdoor café and it rained on and off every night that first week. Some revenue has been generated and the curbside pickup has been helpful. Fortunately, I did receive the PPP compensation, so basically my employees are all being compensated based on income from 2019 plus tip category positions are receiving additional income from gratuities. There are strict guidelines for disbursements so of course there will be a CPA bill to maintain compliance and filing issues.

In late June, early July, we were all set to open the inside of the restaurant at 25% capacity. The staff was quite excited to get started, the restaurant and tables conformed to all the current regulations, food was purchased and our menu expanded slightly. Then the governor reversed his decision. So, there we were again at the cross roads of some major planning.

The PPP money has been exhausted, unfortunately the current income is not enough to support our expenses. I have to say I am discouraged, but I will not give up. Somehow, I'll make it work. I do have the luxury financially to hang on for a while. The fine dining aspect of our business will definitely change. When we do open the restaurant whatever the capacity, we will reduce staffing, inventory, and consolidate the menu.

Eventually, in time, this will come to pass. Looking forward to getting back to some type of normalcy.



Don't Forget

The SCP office reminds you if you move or have any change in your personal or work information to notify the office as soon as possible.

Opportunity Cloaks itself in disappointment- A brief story of how I've maintained my business during the pandemic.

By *Nduvoakim Abdus-Salaam*

The start of 2020 started out as a promising year for my business (café and events company). After opening the café three years prior I started to generate a profit and all systems were in place and ran like a well-oiled machine freeing me up to push the business. I was working on another partnership for a second café as well as booking future private events. As we all know the threat that loomed finally hit NYC and everything shut down. All thought it would be a two week lock down and life would return to normal, that didn't happen. As the weeks went by with uncertainty, every event I had on the books started to fall off, suddenly I had nothing. I took it as an opportunity waiting to happen so I opened the café to just sell coffee until there was more clarity on the pandemic. Once we opened, the neighborhood started to ask if they could purchase some of our ingredients so they could try to replicate our items at home, that's how we started selling pre-made grocery items which has been very successful and kept the café afloat.

Opportunity cloaks itself in disappointment, and that's how my second brand "Nduvo Kitchen" came about. It was an idea I pitched a few years ago, where I would take over the kitchen of existing restaurants that were overwhelmed with dealing with the BOH. My company would collaborate on the menu, would hire and train staff, and make all the food and equipment purchases. We would then give a small percentage of the food sales to the restaurant to cover rent and utilities. It didn't catch on then, but now during the pandemic some restaurants aren't able to staff FOH and BOH, so I've taken the opportunity to relaunch the business and thus far I've collaborated with Bathtub Gin and Woodlot with more scheduled collaborations currently in the works. For me I didn't have the knee jerk reaction when the pandemic hit. Instead, I looked for the opportunities and went back to my bin of ideas and reintroduced them.

Bistro Vendome

by *Pascal Petiteau*

Since the start of the pandemic, Bistro Vendome hasn't closed. My wife and I decided to stay open for takeout and deliveries in order to limit the amount of perishable food wasted.

Knowing that 90% of our customers are from the surrounding neighborhood and that they don't cook often, we felt confident that we would be getting a sufficient amount of orders.

We started out with two busboys that would run deliveries and two cooks. Our menu was reduced to five appetizers, five entrées, and three desserts for the first three weeks that would change every day in order to give customers different options daily. We also reduced the price of our menu items by 20% and reduced the price of bottles of wine by 50%. For the first weeks, we didn't use any online ordering platforms, so customers would call the restaurant directly. When we started using Seamless and Grubhub, they take about 20 to 30% of the order cost.

Our menu was getting sent out to the email lists of the neighboring buildings weekly.

We shifted to a larger weekly menu for about three weeks and after Memorial Day, we returned to our normal menu. Recently, outdoor seating became available in NYC, so we are able to have six tables on our patio and six tables in front of the restaurant and on the street.

We wait for better days, but we continue to do what we can.

Member News

We are happy to welcome a new member to the Société Culinaire Philanthropique family. Sadia Abdus Salaam was born April 14, 2020 at 6:33 pm at Lenox Hill Hospital. Proud parents Nduvoakim Abdus-Salaam and Riefqah Jappie have a love story which is set within the Société. At the time of the 2019 Annual Picnic, they were dating and attended the event. With the approval of Société members, they were engaged two weeks later and married a month after that. Sadia was born premature, weighing 4.75 pounds and 19 inches long, but she is growing in leaps and bounds. We wish the family all the best, and will be happy to see them grow in the coming years.



Pierre Baran, SCP Member and President from 2012-2014, and his family have moved from the Big Apple to the Golden State. Pierre recently retired his position as a Chef Instructor at the Culinary Institute of America. While they will be missed here in NY, we wish Pierre and his family the best of luck in their new home of Anaheim, CA!

Le Confinement

By Allison Zinder

The COVID-19 pandemic isn't over, but one thing's for sure: no one wants to go back to total lockdown like the one we experienced in France from March 17th to May 11th known as *le confinement*, the strict measures were designed to limit the spread of the virus so that hospitals could find beds for every patient coming in with severe symptoms.

It was definitely a challenge for our family. Staying in Paris, shut inside our small apartment, was non-negotiable! On March 16th, we packed up belongings that would fit in a large camping backpack and hopped on an overcrowded train to Burgundy. There, we waited out the lockdown on a working farm in relative comfort and isolation.

Food shopping wasn't easy. But unlike Parisian markets, which were shut down for nearly the duration of the *confinement*, we were able to go to the market in the local village, albeit with strict social distancing measures in place and by wearing masks. Supermarkets were open, but we had to wait in line since the number of people allowed inside was limited.

Back on the farm, our 2½-year-old twins learned how to feed rabbits and gather eggs from the henhouse. They delighted in climbing onto tractors and splashing in mud puddles. We took selfies with barrettes because our hair was too long, and our cat roamed the countryside. We, the parents drank too much Burgundy wine!

All over France, restaurants and cafés opened back up on June 2nd, but there's still an underlying tension. Friends I haven't seen since March lean in for a *bise*, and then we laugh nervously and we do an elbow bump instead. At an interview last week, I stuck out my right hand and then quickly jerked it back when I remembered we're not allowed to shake.

We left Paris in winter, and arrived back on the first day of summer. There is talk of another *confinement* in September, but for the moment, we're taking things one step at a time, starting with the traditional August holiday season. We hope that, as one friend told me, "This pandemic is but a fever dream." Here's to staying healthy and sane while we ride it out. *Santé!*

DeBragga & Spitler and COVID-19

by Marc Sarrazin

Well, this has been a crazy year for all of us in our wonderful hospitality industry. Restaurants and those who serve them, like us, face a very long uphill climb.

At DeBragga we have been trying to do everything in our power to stay in business and to survive until we see light at the end of the tunnel. As we assessed our situation, we found it necessary to make some painful decisions, such as furloughing workers both union and non-union. We went into preservation mode with our inventory. Not an easy task when overnight all of your clients are forced to close by the government, and you have coolers full of every type of protein...and a well-stocked freezer!

We reached out to our customers saying we would work with them on the old balances as long as they stayed current. Most of the restaurant chefs and owners have been wonderful throughout all of this. We are starting to get paid old money as places start to re-open in whatever manner that they can. All clients are now on weekly terms. This has certainly made conversations with our banking partners very interesting and at times very frustrating.

Our mail order business has done very well. We are thankful for that, but in no way does it even begin to replace all of the lost business we have experienced.

At the end of the day we are going to try our hardest to get through to the other side. I think it will be painful and difficult, BUT I do believe that when we come out of this, we will be a better and stronger company than ever before.

We know everyone is trying to make the best of a very difficult situation. We wish nothing but the best of things to all members of our Société! Stay safe and stay well.

The Annual Picnic: Just A Fine Meal?

By Eileen S. DeMarco

As the sun peaks out from behind fluffy white clouds, birds chirp, the grass is damp with dew, French pop music plays through the loudspeakers, and guests trickle onto the manicured grounds of the Culinarians' Home Foundation in New Paltz, New York. Some volunteers scurry about the picnic grounds engaged in the last-minute touches of the event set up; others, clad in white jackets, prepare food in the barn-turned-kitchen and at the grill pavilion; while more are already manning their stations at the breakfast booth and the various game tables. The red, white, and blue of the French and American flags billow in the breeze. The picnic has begun.

The air becomes increasingly heavy with cheerful sound as more and more people arrive and old friends greet each other. Children are happy at play in the game tent and on the lawn. Guests line up to purchase their tombola pieces, in the hopes of bringing home a few bottles of wine or some specialty foods. People spread out their arms to their widest-possible breadth to maximize their chance of purchasing the winning 50/50 ticket. Some try their luck with the traditional raffle and their skill at estimating the gift basket weight. The volume of laughter and chatting rises even more boisterously once the bar opens. Guests gather at the barn's entrance for opening remarks and then excitedly enter the tent to find their tables.

Approximately 1,000 diners are seated inside the large, white tent. Like clockwork, using the system of color-coded paper slips in the envelopes tucked into each paper toque on the tables, the guests retrieve the various courses for their *al fresco* meal easily and efficiently. The din inside the tent intensifies. The Master of Ceremonies must labor to make himself heard over the fray. The door, 50/50, and raffle prizes are drawn. The *brigade* makes an appearance to accept hearty thanks and congratulations from the crowd. The festivities conclude. People bid each other farewell. Volunteers begin the more arduous task of cleaning up after the *fête champêtre*. The picnic has come to a close.

So many hours of labor – planning, purchasing, soliciting donations, fashioning tombola pieces, setting up, chopping, slicing, mixing, grilling, taking down, cleaning, storing – for a single meal. Yet this event, this picnic, is more than just a fancy lunch enjoyed in a bucolic setting. From its inception, it has been – and hopefully will remain – a community builder. Chefs (active and retired), spouses, children, grandchildren, culinary students, friends, extended family, and CHF residents are brought together in this annual gathering. They are mustered not only for a single day, but throughout the year during the months of preparation, the days of hard work before and after, and in the memories of shared time together.

The Société Culinaire Philanthropique was founded in 1865 to create a fellowship of chefs. The Annual Picnic – its joys, its educational opportunities, its challenges, its traditions – helps foster and maintain the bonds of the SCP family. Perhaps having to forgo the gathering in New Paltz this year will spur each one of us to appreciate the SCP and to strengthen it. The Annual Picnic is, indeed, more than just a meal; it is the celebration of our unique community.



Smoked Salmon Production and the Pandemic

by Alain Quirin

In January, Coronavirus was rapidly spreading and people were dying from it. Very bad news to all of us, but not having enough information about how the virus contaminated people and how to stop or prevent it from spreading was very scary. More and more people were dying every day.

First, we worried that this new unknown pathogen could be transmitted through food. We were reassured by our food scientist that it was not a food related disease and that our sanitation prevention measures met the precaution measures that would stop contamination.

As a salmon smoking specialist, bacteria and pathogens are our invisible enemies and our facility follows rules and the guidelines established by the food authorities to prevent bacteria and pathogens from possibly entering the facility.

In February, our sales were down as the hospitality and travel industry were already affected by the spread of the virus, and the restrictions on traveling went into effect. We cancelled our reservations to the Boston International Seafood show out of concern, a productive and informative event that we have not missed for 20 years. The event was officially cancelled anyway.

In March, business was off 40%. I still ordered regular amounts of salmon. My strategy was simple. I smoked the salmon, sliced it, individually packaged it and flash froze it. We did not know what was ahead. We had 1,000 smoked salmon sides in a safe storage. We closed Moveable Feast on March 19th to comply with New Jersey shelter in place rules. For two months we monitored the temperature of the freezer and visited the facility often.

We were closed two months. In June, calls came in from customers looking to purchase smoked salmon. All frozen salmon was sold in less than a month. There was no production expenses and the sales covered rent and other expenses. In July, we started producing again, but only two or three days a week.

We have been able to cover our business expenses and hope for better days.



On Monday, Feb. 24th Henri Dubarry, Jacques and Mireille Coustar visited Mrs. Jacqueline Deltieure for 2 hours where they enjoyed a tarte bourdaloue.

CIA Leads The Way: Culinary Education in the Pandemic

By Cynthia Keller, associate dean—Culinary Fundamentals at The Culinary Institute of America

The End of An Era

by Susan Lifrieri-Lowry

The Coronavirus has hit the hospitality industry hard. As restaurants struggle and hotels are converted to shelters the future of technical education is also unknown.

The International Culinary Center, (ICC) was founded in 1984 by Dorothy Cann Hamilton as the French Culinary Institute, inspired by the French culinary school for professionals called Ferrandi. ICC was closed, as were all schools in mid-March, the employees furloughed until further notice.

On July 6, 2020, in a letter written by [Florence Fabricant](#) in the New York Times, the news was that ICC was merging with the Institute of Culinary Education (ICE) at the Brookfield Place complex in Battery Park City. The Soho location of ICC will be closed at the end of the year.

The news took the industry by surprise. The ICC has survived many obstacles, 9/11, east coast blackouts and the passing of Dorothy Cann Hamilton in 2016. In an e-mail sent out from ICC on July 6th, they said “We are incredibly proud of the work we have done over the years, the contributions that we have made to the food world, and most importantly, of the students and alumni who have passed through our doors.”

Many SCP members have been recruited while working at FCI/ICC. It is the end of an era for many and another tragic outcome of the pandemic.

The events of 2020 have truly put our industry to the test. And at The Culinary Institute of America, there has never been a more appropriate moment to use our mise en place training!

On March 13th, as concerns about the COVID-19 pandemic began to escalate, the CIA quickly suspended classes across all its academic programs. Our administration worked to successfully bring home students studying abroad. We then shifted our focus to determining how to keep students’ education progressing, given our curriculum is primarily dependent on hands-on lab and kitchen instruction. Having introduced a predominantly online Master’s degree program two years ago, we had the infrastructure in place to move the lecture and theory portions of the undergraduate curriculum online.

This enabled us to get students back learning virtually by April 13th—exactly one month after suspending the spring semester. By June 15th, we were allowed to bring students back to campus in California and Texas to complete their spring lab coursework and begin their summer semester with stringent distancing, density reduction, daily health screenings, and other risk mitigation protocols in place. In New York, we had to wait until August 10th to resume the spring semester on campus. Fall semester will begin at all campuses on September 8th.

During this time, we also held four virtual commencement ceremonies. And, we successfully transitioned two of our signature industry leadership conferences—Global Plant-Forward Culinary Summit and Menus of Change Annual Leadership Summit—to virtual platforms, and were able to offer both tuition-free to eligible foodservice operators—something that was very important to us given the pandemic’s impact on the industry.

As we all continue to adapt each day to this new normal, I take comfort in knowing that our mise en place keeps us ready for anything and helps prepare our students to lead our industry, however different it may be in the future.



Culinarians' Home

By Terry Newman

Upcoming Meetings

Quarterly Membership Meeting

- Thursday, October 1, 2020

Newsletter Committee

Louise Hoffman, Chair

Eileen S. DeMarco

Pascal Guillotin

Alain Quirin

Editors

Susan Lifrieri-Lowry

Diane Capuano

Amanda Catton-Johnson



Thank you contributors! Your stories are so valuable and appreciated.

Louise

One cannot praise the residents and the staff at The Culinarians' Home enough for the way they conducted themselves from the moment we were told "we have a problem here".

On March 14th, our residents had to give up many things. Visitors were no longer allowed into the home; board games, bingo, social activities were suspended. Social distancing was extended into the dining rooms separating the residents at meal time. We are now serving half the residents in the dining room, the other half in the activity room, 6 feet apart

Protocol includes taking the residents' temperatures daily at lunch time and questioning them about symptoms. Masks are worn by all in public spaces. Any trip to the emergency room, the doctor, or any other trip away from the Home, lands a resident in quarantine in their room for 14 days. On May 27th Ulster County tested all our residents for COVID and all tests came back negative.

On Mother's Day, with no guidance from the New York State Department of Health, we began allowing scheduled window visits for the residents. We monitored the visits ensuring zero contact, all doors and windows remained closed. One cannot appreciate our residents and their families enough, the understanding and acceptance by all has been an inspiration and motivation to our staff.

Our staff, with their own concerns have understood the responsibility being placed on them. The staff implemented the policies which limited our residents and doubled down on cleaning and sanitizing. They are prepared to care for a resident suspected of having the virus. The staff underwent COVID testing twice a week during May and June and once weekly since June. They are constantly being reminded to stay healthy at home so they can be at The Culinarians' Home to care for our residents.

Our residents and staff remain healthy as of this article, August 10th. We hear many thank yous from our residents and their families which is greatly appreciated. We look forward to better days ahead.



Office News

Please join us in giving a warm welcome to Amanda Catton-Johnson who joined the Société on August 3rd as the Assistant Office Manager. Amanda will work along with Diane Capuano and perform the administrative work of the organization and help support our members' needs. Best Wishes, Amanda!