

CALIFORNIA 

FREEMASON

Dec/Jan 2009

A photograph of Chuck Williams, founder of Williams-Sonoma, standing in a kitchenware store. He is an older man with glasses, wearing a grey blazer over an orange shirt and grey trousers, with his arms crossed. He is positioned in front of a large blue double oven. To his left and right are shelves displaying various kitchen tools, including knives and spatulas. Above the shelves are signs for 'Side Dish Checklist' and 'Roasting Checklist'. The background shows a multi-level store interior with wooden floors and railings.

The Craft of Cooking

How Chuck Williams, founder of Williams-Sonoma, changed American kitchens

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The American Way of Cooking

In the 1950s Brother Chuck Williams, a California carpenter, visited France and was inspired by the high quality of cookware he saw in European homes and restaurants. He returned with a plan to bring those same cooking tools into American kitchens. Williams did just that, founding the Williams-Sonoma company and innovating how Americans cook.



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BROTHERHOOD AND BREAKING BREAD



Kenneth G. Nagel

Deputy Grand Master

We all look forward to a family gathering around a holiday meal or a special occasion with friends, celebrated with good food and great company. The conversation becomes friendlier and less rushed. We can really listen to each other and appreciate the moment more than we might be able to sitting around a conference table or on the phone.

That experience holds true for Masonry, as well. We often joke that Masonry is the art of practicing our craft between meals; we meet, greet, and eat.

This issue of California Freemason magazine is dedicated to Masonry and food. The feature article is about how Brother Chuck Williams transformed American kitchens more than 50 years ago by founding the first store, Williams-Sonoma, to stock quality

European cookware. Read about a sampling of the brothers in this jurisdiction who are running restaurants, vineyards, olive groves, and culinary schools, and keeping lodges well-fed. You'll also learn about the history of food in the lodge and some of our international brothers' traditions surrounding mealtime.

While we appreciate the creature comforts of good food, we know that Masonry is about more than eating well. What message can we take from this issue that will help us on our Masonic path to becoming better men?

We cannot underestimate the importance of camaraderie in our fraternity. The idea of "breaking bread" with others is about fellowship, which is integral to Masonry. We form bonds with people from other generations, beliefs,

and cultures over a shared meal. In lodge, sharing a meal creates an opportunity to get to know our brothers casually. It creates an opportunity to engage new brothers and learn about their lives and family. At the same time, it's a chance to mentor and share knowledge in an enjoyable setting. It is one way to foster the kind of environment which draws men to lodge today.

Each one of us should make that special effort to really connect with our brothers. I think that the custom of sharing a good meal together, which is a valuable part of culture and traditions around the world, is one means for doing that. Probably all of us can think of a favorite memory around a lodge meal. I think that this issue will remind you of it, and hopefully inspire us to create more. ✦

Cuisine Scene

by Cason Lane

Meet California Masons in the food trade

For much of the world, California has long been synonymous with fine wine and a thriving agricultural industry. In recent years, it has also gained renown as a hub for the slow food movement. And throughout this culturally diverse state, independent restaurants introduce customers daily to foreign dishes and the cultures that created them.

Dine on Peruvian cuisine at Brother Juan Cespedes' San Francisco restaurant, Essencia.

“It never occurred to me to do something else. When you make wine, you live it.”

Masons throughout California have had a hand in all facets of Golden State gastronomy, and here, we feature three brothers who work behind the scenes – and in front of them – in the diverse and delicious world of food.

VINES AND WINES

You could say that Frank Indelicato Sr., past master of Tyrian Lodge No. 439 in Manteca, was born to be a vintner. In 1924, Indelicato's father and uncle established the Delicato Family Vineyard on 68 acres of farmland in Manteca. Initially, the family grew grapes to sell to home winemakers, but following the rise and subsequent fall of Prohibition, the Indelicatos began making their own wine in 1935. Today, the family cultivates more than 10,000 acres of vineyards in Monterey and Lodi, which produce more than 20 million gallons of wine a year.

“We’re a winery’s winery,” says Indelicato. “We sell grapes to and make wines for other wineries, but we also make wine under our own label.”

The variety of wines on the Delicato label includes pinot grigio, merlot, and an award-winning shiraz.

Though Indelicato left the vineyard in the early 1940s to earn a bachelor's degree from the University of California-Berkeley, he knew the wine business was where he belonged.

“It never occurred to me to do something else,” he says. “When you make wine, you live it.”

And while Indelicato, 83, handed over the day-to-day operation of the winery years ago to the family's next generation, he remains involved in the business. “People ask me when I’m going to retire,” he says. “I don’t fish, I don’t hunt. This is my life. I enjoy it.”

A TASTE OF PERU

Juan Cespedes, of Columbia-Brotherhood Lodge No. 370 in San Francisco, left his native Peru for the United States in 1961. Despite being just 18 years old and not knowing English, Cespedes was determined to make a life in America.

After a few years toiling in Bay Area restaurants, Cespedes became a general contractor and eventually a property owner. In 2001 he became a Mason, following in the footsteps of his father, who was a Mason in Peru. A few years later, Cespedes set out to accomplish another goal. When a storefront became vacant in a building he owned, Cespedes jumped at the opportunity to fulfill a dream – open a restaurant featuring Peruvian cuisine.

Cespedes and his wife, Carmen, opened Essencia restaurant in the Hayes Valley neighborhood of San Francisco nearly two years ago. The restaurant serves traditional Peruvian dishes with a modern twist, including “arroz con mariscos,” a paella-style seafood dish, and “chupe,” a shrimp chowder with sea bass, English peas, and a fried quail egg.

“Many people don’t know what Peruvian food is,” Cespedes says. “It has a lot of different influences – Chinese, European, African, and Japanese.”

Juggling two businesses keeps the 65-year-old Cespedes busy. “It’s not always easy,” he says. “There’s always something to do.” But despite the full plate, he’s quite satisfied.





Pictured from left: Frank Indelicato Sr. in his Manteca vineyard, established in 1924 by his father and uncle; Juan Cespedes enjoys a meal at his Peruvian restaurant; Timothy Wood showcases the extra-virgin olive oil produced at Wood Ranch Estate.

A CALIFORNIA 'OIL' MAN

A chance encounter with a bicyclist changed Tim Wood's life forever. Wood, Grand Chaplain and trustee, Masonic Homes of California, was clearing brush off his six-acre property in Livermore a few years ago when a man cycling past stopped and asked whether Wood had ever considered growing olive trees. The man then invited Wood to attend a meeting with other local landowners to discuss the idea.

"I didn't know anything about the food business," says Wood, whose background is in Internet technology. "But I studied the industry and thought I'd give it a try."

Through his research, Wood discovered that Americans consume more than 60 million gallons of olive oil a year, with only one percent coming from California. Wood, along with others in the Livermore Olive Growers Association, set out to change that.

In 2005, Wood established Wood Ranch Estate, where he makes extra-virgin olive oil from the nearly

"It's great to see someone's face when they try true extra-virgin olive oil for the first time," he says. "You can do it right or you can do it wrong. We do it right."

1,000 olive trees on his property. Today, his estate makes three different kinds of olive oil, which Wood says are made from a very simple process – from tree to hand, hand to truck, truck to press.

"It's great to see someone's face when they try true extra-virgin olive oil for the first time," he says. "You can do it right or you can do it wrong. We do it right."

Doing it right means more than creating a premium product; it means conducting your business with integrity. Wood, who became a Mason in 1995, firmly believes in the Masonic principles of ethics and philanthropy, and regularly donates his high-quality olive oils for auction at Masonic charitable events. ✧



Brothers at La Parfaite Union Lodge savor a meal prepared by lodge member and French Master Chef Patrick Farjas.

Bon Appétit!

by Cason Lane

French lodges celebrate two of their passions

Fine cuisine is a cornerstone of French culture and tradition. And though California is thousands of miles from the brasseries of Paris, the state's two French-speaking lodges regularly gather for meals to celebrate two of their passions – Freemasonry and food. In fact, their membership rolls boast two of the world's Master Chefs of France.

La Parfaite Union Lodge No.17 in San Francisco is fortunate to have one of those French Master Chefs – one of only about 150 still active in the world – as a heavily involved brother. When Patrick Farjas isn't running his Day Break Gourmet Café in San Mateo or teaching at the California Culinary Academy in San Francisco, he is

preparing traditional French meals for La Parfaite Union Lodge.

Once a month, members gather at the lodge for a sit-down French dinner of a distinctly refined caliber.

"Food is very, very important at the lodge," says Farjas, who has been preparing lodge meals for more than 10 years. "Typically, I do a three-course dinner. When

there's any type of special occasion, I'll do a four-course dinner. And wine is always welcome."

In addition to savoring excellent food, lodge members savor the opportunity to engage in lively conversation over a relaxing repast. Secretary Bruno Fraeyman, for example, says gathering around a table builds camaraderie among the brothers.

"We talk more over a meal," he says. "It's French tradition to talk while you're eating, especially about food!"

Senior Steward Alexandre

Alesandrini agrees. “We are a small, strong lodge, and our meals are very important,” he says. “We share our experiences, our lives in the United States.”

Building membership with meals

Not surprisingly, lodge members look forward to the monthly meetings and the opportunity to indulge in Farjas’ incredible French cuisine – so much so that the August stated meeting, which typically draws just a handful of attendees, had reservations this year for 22. In short, having a French chef around has also proven to be a great tool to boost attendance.

“When I’m cooking, we double the number of brothers coming in,” says Farjas. “We have a very small number of members [42] because we are a French-speaking lodge, but I have to say we’ve been doing pretty well for the past few years in turn-out. I think a lot of that has to do with the food.”

New members and veteran Masons alike can’t resist the incentive of Farjas’ cooking at lodge meetings. La Parfaite Union also attracts a fair share of Masons from elsewhere in the Bay Area, particularly to the lodge’s annual Feast of St. John the Baptist. The June event, celebrating a patron saint of Freemasonry, is a formal affair including a champagne reception and a five-course dinner prepared by Chef Farjas.

Farjas also spreads culinary camaraderie by cooking for other Masonic organizations around the Bay Area, including Academia Lodge No. 847 in Oakland, the Scottish Rite in Oakland, and Peninsula Lodge No. 168 in San Carlos. Whether it’s for a

large charity event or a small dinner at the lodge, Farjas sees food as an important part of Masonic tradition.



Patrick Farjas puts finishing touches on the dessert course.

Food and founding fathers

In Pasadena, California’s other French-speaking lodge, Vallee de France No. 329, has a rich history whose driving characters were linked to food.

“Most of our founding members were involved with cooking,” says Secretary Tony Bright. “It seems one attracted another to the lodge.” The lodge received its charter in 1897, and from the start its members included chefs and restaurateurs who were heavily involved in bringing French food to southern California. Brother Jean Doree was the founder of the Franco-American Bakery; Urban Taix was founder of the Parisian Baking Company. Bright remembers that when he was initiated at Vallee de France, brothers Andre Caen and Jacques Visier were among the lodge’s great chefs. Past Master Georges Peyre, still active, owned the restaurant Café France in Burbank during his

year as master and often prepared meals at stated meetings.

Bright notes that while many of the restaurant owners and chefs that he recalls from his earliest days in the lodge have since passed away, the legacy is carried on by brother Michel Blanchet, yet another French Master Chef of the world who is a California Mason. “He is an outstanding chef, one of the greatest,” Bright says.

Today, many of the lodge’s younger members have a common involvement in the entertainment industry rather than food, so meals at Vallee de France are more casual than the dinners at La Parfaite Union. But members relish the company of their brothers just the same. And while the cuisine has evolved to include more than just French food, there’s one French staple that’s always served: “Without wine there would be no refreshment,” Bright says. “It’s a tradition.”

For these French lodges, traditions in food and refreshment are a connecting force.

“Early Masons would meet in places where food was involved – inns and restaurants,” Farjas says. “Food was always an important part of gatherings.” He points out that today, the tradition of meals and fine food still helps overcome the first hurdle for lodges: getting members to attend.

“Through my food, I’m trying to get the members to show up,” he says. “Once they’re there, we can talk about why they joined – how you have to show why you joined through your actions.” ✨



Ornate Masonic punchbowls, such as the one above from our museum collection, have a historic role in lodges' mealtime traditions.

THE LODGE AT REFRESHMENT

By John L. Cooper III, Past Grand Secretary

Opposing page inset: This 18th century engraving depicts the arrangement of early lodges "at refreshment."

A Masonic lodge has many curious customs handed down through the years, and none perhaps more curious than the concept of the lodge "at refreshment." In this issue devoted to food and our craft, it seems appropriate to look at the history of the idea of a lodge "at refreshment" – and the similarly curious idea of a lodge officer whose primary duty is to make sure that Masons don't eat and drink too much!

When the junior warden of a lodge is installed, this is the charge given to him by the installing officer:

“To you is committed the superintendence of the Craft during the hours of refreshment; it is necessary, therefore, that you should practice moderation and discretion in the indulgence of your own inclinations, and that you carefully observe that the means of refreshment are not converted to improper or excessive use.”

When lodges are at refreshment, and thereby called from Masonic “labor,” they are under the supervision and control of the junior warden, as symbolized in the lodge room by the column on his pedestal. When the lodge is at refreshment, and under his supervision, his column is in the upright position. When it is so positioned, the members are visually reminded that the lodge is at refreshment and that they should pay attention to the junior warden’s important role in regulating their conduct.

The origin of this peculiar custom – an officer assigned to make sure that Masons do not eat and drink too much – lies in the early history of our lodges in the 17th and 18th centuries. In those days lodges met in taverns, where food and drink were the primary business of the establishment. They often used a private dining room as their meeting place and met around a horseshoe-shaped table arrangement. The degrees were usually conferred in the space in the middle of the room, with the tables on three sides. Members and officers sat around the outside edge of the tables so that they had a clear view of the ceremonies in the center of the room as well as a clear view of each other, arranged around the table. Unlike our modern customs, they did not confer the degrees in a lodge room and then retire to a separate room for food and drink.

They ate and drank in the same lodge room – but only while the lodge was “at refreshment” and under the control of the junior warden. They were not supposed to carry on with eating and drinking while the degrees were in progress on the floor in front of them.

Then, as now, Masons enjoyed their food and drink. Lodge minute books from those times are filled with bills paid for food, wine, and “punch:” rum punch, which had quite a kick to it. There are still in existence Masonic “punchbowls” – ceramic bowls highly decorated with Masonic symbols and emblems – which were used by lodges to serve up the punch to members. The service of this food and drink was the responsibility of the stewards; some lodges had more than the customary senior and junior stewards if their membership was

large enough to warrant it.

It is also clear that Masons of those days did not always use good judgment about how much to eat and drink. It is probably from this era that our First Masonic Cardinal Virtue, Temperance, comes. In the language of our ritual, “Temperance is that due restraint upon the affections and passions which renders the body tame and governable, and frees the mind from the allurements of vice. This virtue should be your constant practice, as you are thereby taught to avoid excess...”

While Masons today are unlikely to be tempted to return to the riotous behavior of earlier times, there is still the danger that we will forget the importance of temperance as a cardinal virtue. Too much of a good thing is hazardous to anyone’s health, whether that applies to food and drink or to getting carried away with too much fun at someone else’s expense. We still install a junior warden in each lodge to remind us that too much food, drink, or “fun” can be ruinous to our health – and to the health of the lodge. Each one of us should take it as our personal duty to see “that the means of refreshment are not converted to improper or excessive use.”



By Richard Berman

The American Few Way of Cooking

How Chuck Williams revolutionized our kitchens

The 1950s were transformative years for kitchens across America. Julia Child moved to Paris in 1948 and fell in love with French cuisine, describing her first meal as “an opening up of the soul and spirit.” Child went on to study at the iconic Cordon Bleu cooking school and with several top French chefs, then began a culinary renaissance by introducing French cuisine via cookbooks and a widely popular television show – especially to an eager American audience.

More than 3,000 miles west of Child’s kitchen in Cambridge, Massachusetts, a self-taught carpenter and contractor in Sonoma, California was also tapping into America’s love affair with French-style cooking. Charles “Chuck” Williams had been similarly inspired by a trip abroad. “I learned how to cook from my grandmother. When I first went to France in the 1950s, I was amazed by the quality of the cookware that people had in their homes,” says Williams. “Restaurants in the United States

had great equipment, but the stuff sold for home use was cheap, thin aluminum. It just wasn’t good for cooking like they do in France – you couldn’t buy the professional-quality pots, pans, and other tools.”

Seeing a good business opportunity, Williams purchased property in Sonoma in 1954 that included a few store fronts. Motivated by his trip to France, he decided to turn one, a former hardware store, into the first Williams-Sonoma. He stocked



it with the cookware he'd admired abroad. "We were the only store in the country that sold European cookware, and the demand was enormous," Williams says. In 1958 he moved the business to the Union Square shopping district in San Francisco and quickly established a national reputation for Williams-Sonoma as the premier source for everything from soufflé dishes to high-quality knives to enamel and copper pots.

Williams, now 93 years old, says that for a long time he was unable to carry American-made products in his store. "There were plenty of companies making good pieces here, but they only wanted to sell to restaurants," he explains. "Professional chefs always had quality equipment, but there was a perception that the home market just wasn't ready for it. In France and other countries, they didn't feel that way. Homes had quality cookware."

The downtown location of the Union Square store, close to doctors' offices, women's spas,

clubs, and conference centers, attracted passersby who then took an interest in its unique inventory of French cookware. This timed well with the launch of Julia Child's books and television program, "The French Chef," in the 1960s, which were inspiring Americans to try out new recipes at home. Most of the equipment that was necessary to make her dishes wasn't part of the

"I have always loved cooking, and I love helping people learn how to cook better food."

average American kitchen, which created an opportunity for Williams to fill the void. Williams-Sonoma became the source for outfitting Americans' newly invigorated kitchens. "I always knew what was on her show because the next day people would come into my store and ask for the items they had seen," he says. This attention to customer needs was a driving force behind the store's popularity. "The cooking was different – people here didn't even have sauté pans or decent knives, so we sold a lot of those in the store," Williams says.

Williams recalls Child appearing at Macy's in San Francisco for an event and making a special trip to visit his store. "Her sister, who lived in Sausalito, introduced us and we stayed in touch for many years. We were the only ones selling the items that she was using on her show," he says.

One of the major reasons for Williams-Sonoma's success was the way that Williams displayed the merchandise. "Most department stores had all of their pots and pans stacked up on tables. My approach was to show the items so that people could see the whole thing," he says. His innovations included displaying products all facing the same direction with the handles on the right "so people could pick them up the way they would in the kitchen." Williams adds, "I had teapots and kettles displayed so people could see the handles and spouts, which was different from how other stores were showing them. I became noted for how the store showed products."

In addition to selling cooking tools, Williams also began to stock food items that were hard to find in this country, such as wine vinegar,



The Masonic connections that

Like many men of his generation, Williams' father was a Mason, and he followed his father into the craft. "Back in Jacksonville, Florida, where I grew up, my father was a Shriner and my mother was in Eastern Star. I really grew up with Masonry all around me," Williams

relays. "I remember when I was 10 years old, my father took me along for the ride to a Masonic event, and he really knew so much about it."

At 38 years of age, Williams became a brother of Temple Lodge No. 14 in Sonoma. "I remember the day: November 14, 1953. I received

“Most department stores had all of their pots and pans stacked up on tables. My approach was to show the items so that people could see the whole thing.”

balsamic vinegar, and high-end olive oil. “Williams-Sonoma was also the first company to import wine glasses to this country,” he says. “After Prohibition ended it took a long time for the wine industry to recover, so when we started selling wine glasses in the 1960s it was very unusual.” Williams-Sonoma also made its mark producing more than 200 cookbooks. To date, the company has sold more than 30 million books internationally.

In response to the popularity of its San Francisco store, Williams-Sonoma launched its mail-order catalogue in 1971 and opened stores in Beverly Hills, Palo Alto, and Orange County’s South Coast Plaza. Today the company – of which Williams still serves as Director Emeritus – operates more than 250 stores in the United States and Canada.

Not surprisingly, Williams has received just about every major

American cooking award. In 1994, the James Beard Foundation named him to the Who’s Who of Food and Beverage and in 1995 gave him its Lifetime Achievement Award. Bon Appetit magazine named him the Tastemaker of the Year for 1999, he was awarded the 2001 Lifetime Achievement Award by the International Association of Culinary Professionals, and in 2003 he was recognized by the Housewares Foundation as Humanitarian of the Year. In 2006, he was honored as a Visionary Retailer at the seventh annual Giants of Design Awards presented by House Beautiful magazine. Williams has also served on the boards of the American Institute of Wine and Food and the Culinary Institute of America (CIA). He was inducted into CIA’s hall of fame in 2002.



Innovative, customer-friendly displays became a Williams-Sonoma trademark thanks to founder Chuck Williams, pictured in the San Francisco flagship store.

“I have always loved cooking, and I love helping people learn how to cook better food,” he says. “Food has come so far in this country in the last 50 years, and it’s been wonderful to be part of the change.” ✨

shaped his path

a letter from the master – which I still have – and I got my third degree at a ceremony at the lodge,” he says. “An electrician from Sweden was one of my friends and he was very involved as a Mason, so we were in the lodge together.” That same brother from Sweden hosted Williams on his fateful

first trip to Europe, which ignited his love for French cookery.

Williams opened his first store less than two years later, and by 1958 had moved his home and business to San Francisco. That same year, just blocks away in the same city, the California Masonic Memorial Temple

was dedicated as the new home of the Grand Lodge of California. For both Williams and Grand Lodge, the year 2008 marked a 50th anniversary milestone.



By Richard Berman

THE

MASONIC MEAL

From the earliest days of Freemasonry, formal social behavior has been an integral part of official lodge activities. From black-tie – or even white-tie – attire to proper formal greetings, Masons have always prided themselves on maintaining a high level of dignity, honoring the nature of the craft and the brotherhood that it provides.

Then and now, in lodges and grand lodges around the world, meals serve as opportunities for brothers to interact in a formal setting that celebrates those ancient traditions. And just

ENJOYING FOOD AND FRATERNITY ABROAD

as there is no single ritual that covers all of the world's Masonic organizations, the traditions of the Masonic meal vary considerably from country to country.

ENGLAND

Edgar W. Fentum, past master of Los Altos Lodge No. 712, is an eighth-generation Mason who was initiated in England and received most

of his degrees beyond the craft in the United Kingdom before moving to the United States in 1987. "Although there is great diversity among British lodges, all of them are very formal," Fentum says. "That includes our meals, which we call the Festive Board."

"Although there is great diversity among British lodges, all of them are very formal. That includes our meals."

Fentum, who now lives at the Masonic Home at Union City, points out that even when it comes to the Festive Board, there are considerable differences throughout the country – from expensive meals at hotels to simple dinners prepared by caterers and served in lodge. "The diversity of English Freemasonry is reflected in its development in different parts of the country during the 18th century, and the Festive Board reflects that diversity," he explains. Fentum notes that few lodges have their own members prepare meals. Instead, the tendency is to hire servers who are assisted by the lodge stewards. The cost to attend Festive Board is about \$20 and up, and those brothers who attend often provide the wine and beer.

According to Fentum, English lodges make time for one other mealtime tradition on their yearly calendar: "There is usually one Ladies' Night a year, at which ladies receive gifts from the master," he says. "It's often held in a hotel, and represents a major event in the Masonic year."

DENMARK

Jens Lassen, grand chancellor of the Grand Lodge of Denmark, points to formality as one of the hallmarks of Masonry in his country. "We wear tails at all of our meetings, so there is always a sense of formality at our meals," Lassen describes. "For regular meetings we usually have open sandwiches, but our formal events, which take

place four or five times a year, have a three-course meal."

One of the meal-time rituals that has evolved among Danish Masons is the toast to the country's queen, which is given at the start of every meal. Lassen says that an annual New Year's tradition is the exchange of telegrams (since replaced by regular letters) between the Grand Lodge and the queen. "We always send a telegram wishing her a good year and she responds in kind," he says. "Both letters are read at our New Year's meal followed by the singing of the national hymn."

SCOTLAND

Robert Cooper, curator of the Grand Lodge of Scotland Museum and Library, says that an early Scottish Masonic tradition was for new initiates to

Another uniquely Scottish tradition is the annual Robbie Burns dinner – featuring haggis as the main course – in honor of Scotland's best-known writer, who was also a Mason.

pay for the lodge meals for the rest of the brothers. "This went on until the 18th century, when the lodges got bigger and it became too expensive," he explains. "After that, the lodge's tiler, who was usually a paid staffer, would buy all of the food and then be reimbursed by the members."

Another uniquely Scottish tradition is the annual Robbie Burns dinner – featuring haggis as the main course – in honor of Scotland's best-known writer, who was also a Mason. Every January, lodges throughout the country hold a dinner honoring the writer who penned "A Red, Red Rose," "Auld Lang Syne," and countless other poems. "This is a very big year for us," Cooper relays, "because 2009 is the 250th anniversary of Burns' birth. It is going to be a year-long celebration, and there will be many, many Burns suppers in his honor." ❖

HomeCookin'

By Laura Normand

Distinct approaches, delicious results

Few things say “welcome home” like a thoughtfully prepared meal. Thanks to a dedicated Food and Dining Services team, the same holds true at the Masonic Homes.

“Our residents want good, home-cooked meals,” says Shirleen Nielsen, Director of Food and Dining Services at the Home at Covina. “We take into consideration where everyone comes from and what their comfort foods are.”

TRANSFORMING THE EXPERIENCE

When Nielsen came to Covina 18 years ago, she used her background in restaurant management to transform the residents’ dining experience. She developed a restaurant-style dining program, where residents order from


a selective menu and servers bring food to their tables.

“Because we have just 70 seniors here, we’re able to personalize living and dining experiences,” Nielsen explains. “By doing this plate-to-plate service, it allows me and my servers to know the residents individually. That was the direction that I believed we

needed to go, because we can. That’s the quaintness of being so small.”

Nielsen raves about her work experience as part of the Home’s Dining Services, and the opportunity she’s been given to make a difference in the lives of residents. “This fraternity really cares about their residents. They care about the quality of life that these people receive,” she says. “Because of that, it allows us the freedom to offer great service to our customers.”

John Marshall, Director of Food and Dining Services at the Masonic Home at Union City, shares the sentiment. “This November marks six years for me here,” he says. “I wish I’d started 10 years ago.”

A full-page photograph of a chef, Lupe Bogarin, in a professional kitchen. He is wearing a white chef's coat with black piping, a black toque, and white gloves. He is focused on his work, using a spoon to stir something in a pan on a stainless steel countertop. The background shows a typical kitchen environment with stainless steel surfaces, hanging pots, and fire extinguishers. The lighting is warm and focused on the chef.

Lupe Bogarin, sous chef, has been creating meals for Covina residents for eight years.

John Marshall called upon decades of experience at five star restaurants to revamp the menu at Union City.





Fresh produce from the garden is a menu staple at the Home at Union City.

Marshall came to the Home after three decades in the hospitality industry. He spent years designing and opening restaurants, running catering for major luxury events, and building a long resume for himself as chef at some of the best restaurants in London, Paris, and Munich. In 2002, he left the hustle and bustle of five star restaurants for the home on the hill in Union City.

"After 30 years in the hospitality industry, I was looking for something new," Marshall says. "A friend of mine called and said, 'John, a place needs you.'" At his friend's suggestion, he applied for the position with the Masonic Home at Union City, and the rest is history. His first assignment was to bring the dining services operation – which was run by an outside for-profit organization – entirely in-house. At Union City, the kitchen turns out more than 1,000 meals per day.

After assembling his employee team from professional contacts in the area, Marshall focused on always-changing menu items, fresh, seasonal ingredients, and spending extra time to, for example, skewer every last chicken spiedini for a professional result. "We've really been able to take the dining experience up several notches," Marshall says.

FRESH FROM THE GARDEN

At Union City, dining services has extended outdoors into the gardens. One is just outside the Adams building; the other, a quarter-acre plot referred to as the North Forty, lies just up the road, apart from the residential building.

"A few years ago, I got an idea from two ladies here that were growing tomato plants in pots," Marshall recalls. "I took part of the lawn and put in boxes with raised beds, and divided them up among the residents for gardening."

That was three years ago. The following year, Marshall filled the remainder of the lawn with garden boxes. This year, the gardens produced numerous fruits and vegetables, including corn, onions, carrots, green beans, arugula, basil, chiles, jabanero peppers, beets, oranges, grapefruit, pluots (a cross between a plum and an apricot), apples, and a few types of melons. Everything is grown organically.

The gardens also yield 18 varieties of heirloom tomatoes. "I think we've produced close to 3,000 pounds of tomatoes this year for the kitchen," Marshall says. "At \$4 or \$5 a pound for heirloom tomatoes at the farmers markets – you do the math."

The gardens may have been Marshall's brainchild, but residents have rolled up their sleeves to help turn out all that home-grown produce. Together with members of Siminoff Daylight Lodge, a resident-driven Garden Committee works nine months out of the year to keep up the gardens. Marshall and the team are planning to expand the garden, more than doubling its size and planting winter crops. These will be incorporated into the menu much like current favorites: BLMasonicT sandwich (made with tomatoes from the garden), Masonic roasted beet salad, and Masonic corn chowder.

CREATING THE MENUS

No, these are not your average dining halls. And the residents get part of the credit.

Once a month, the Food Committees for Covina and Union City meet on their respective



Shirleen Nielsen transformed the dining experience at Covina with a customer service focus that allows servers to know the residents individually.

campuses and discuss upcoming menus with Nielsen and Marshall. At the last Union City meeting, Marshall put three options for a new china dining set up for group vote. Nielsen accepts family recipes for inclusion at Covina.

“We discuss our upcoming menus and the seasonal changes that will be affecting things,” Marshall explains.

The menus that come out of those sessions read like the specials at your favorite neighborhood café: arugula, pear, and crispy leek salad with feta cheese and balsamic vinaigrette; pork piccata with green peppercorn sauce; prime rib and home-baked apple cake. For the Food and Dining Services teams, it’s all part of a day’s work.

“You get an overwhelming sense of gratification when you walk through the dining room and the residents tell you how great their meal was,” Nielsen says. “It makes it well worth the effort.” ✧

Connecting With the Homes

MASONIC OUTREACH SERVICES (MOS)

Masonic Outreach Services (MOS), a program of the Masonic Homes of California, provides our fraternal family access to the services and resources they need to stay healthy and safe in their homes or in retirement facilities in their home communities.

These services include:

- Information and referrals to community-based senior providers throughout California
- Ongoing care management at no cost
- Financial support

MOS also provides interim financial and care support to those who are on the waiting list for the Masonic Homes of California. Contact us at **888/466-3642** or intake@mhcuc.org.

ACACIA CREEK COMMUNITIES

To learn more about the Acacia Creek communities, visit acaciacreek.org or contact:

Acacia Creek at Covina

626/646-2962 or 800/801-9958
sbaum@acaciacreek.org

Acacia Creek at Union City

510/429-6479 or 888/553-7555
dwiley@acaciacreek.org

CHILDREN’S AND FAMILY SERVICES

For program information or to sponsor a child in need, contact **626/251-2227** or hramirez@mhccov.org.

SPEAKERS AVAILABLE

The Masonic Homes has speakers available to come to your lodge to speak about our range of services. For more information, contact **888/466-3642** or communications@mhcuc.org.



**Meet Patrick Farjas
French Master Chef
Mason since 1996**

Faces of Masonry

The brothers at La Parfaite Union Lodge No. 17 in San Francisco refer to Patrick Farjas as their Chef Mason, and with good cause. Since Farjas offered to prepare his first stated meeting dinner and produced five mouth-watering courses, his fame has spread throughout the fraternity. Now, he prepares food for nine lodges and Masonic organizations.

"The food gets guys to come to lodge," Farjas explains. "It's the thought of doing something special for them."

Food has been Farjas' passion since boyhood, when he'd sneak out of the house to help the neighborhood baker. In the years since, he's earned the titles of French Master Chef of the World,

Professor de Cuisine of the California Culinary Academy in San Francisco, restaurant owner – and Master Mason.

Farjas was drawn to Masonry for its emphasis on philanthropy, and currently runs more than 25 charitable events throughout the year. "Everything charitable that I do is involved with food," he says. When he's not in the kitchen or teaching, Farjas likes to ride his motorcycles, camp, and spend time with his fiancée, Dana, and children, Chantel and Marcel.



Masons of California

Secretaries' Retreats

The Secretaries' Retreats are designed to strengthen collective knowledge of the administrative operations of the lodge and to enhance lodge secretaries' communication with each other and the grand secretary's office.

2009 RETREATS Dates and Locations

Southern Retreat
February 20-22
Irvine, California

Northern Retreat
March 20-22
San Ramon, California

Wardens' Retreats

The Wardens' Leadership Retreats are designed to develop the leadership skills of junior and senior wardens in programs tailored to each office. Training programs include developing a lodge plan and vision, providing resources to meet those goals, and implementing benchmarks to measure lodge success.

2009 RETREATS Dates and Locations


Junior Wardens
April 3-5
San Ramon, California

April 24-26
Ontario, California

Senior Wardens
May 15-17
San Ramon, California

May 29-31
Ontario, California

Retreats are two and a half days, held over a weekend. Registration forms may be downloaded from the Member Center (administrative Web site) by selecting the Forms drop-down menu, then Leadership Training, or by visiting freemason.org, selecting the Member Center drop-down menu at the top of the page, then choosing Leadership Development. Contact James Banta, Program Manager, at **415/292-9118** with any questions.

 Grand Lodge F & AM of California
1111 California Street
San Francisco, California 94108

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