



Colorado Chapter of Les Dames d'Escoffier

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For Immediate Release

Les Dames d'Escoffier : A Brief History

August, 2008, Denver, Colo., ... The Colorado chapter of Les Dames d'Escoffier, an international, invitational philanthropic organization of women in the hospitality industry, shares a brief history of the organization.

Les Dames d'Escoffier International: A Brief History

In the 1970s, a group of Boston women formed Les Dames des Amis d'Escoffier as a branch of Les Amis d'Escoffier, a male-only culinary organization known for its elaborate, multi-course dinners partaken in the formal style of gastronomic legend Auguste Escoffier. In November 1976, fifty professional women in the fields of food, wine, and hospitality received a charter from the men's organization to start their own group, and Les Dames d'Escoffier New York was born.

Les Dames d'Escoffier's goal was to heighten visibility for women in the hospitality industry and to help them get the training necessary to qualify as equals to men. Members were encouraged to serve as role models and mentors. The formula, designed to encourage expansion, determined in its original by-laws that this growth would begin as soon as there were five regional chapters.

Four additional chapters were subsequently formed: Washington, D.C. (1981), Chicago (1982), and Dallas and Philadelphia (1984). In 1985, the presidents from all five chapters met in New York City to build the foundation for Les Dames d'Escoffier International (LDEI). They developed its proposed by-laws along with guidelines for chapter formation and membership.

In 1986 LDEI became official. The landmark event was attended by members representing all five chapters, who joined together to celebrate the past, present, and future accomplishments of professional women in wine, food, and hospitality. Two months later, also in New York, Les Dames d'Escoffier International held its first board meeting. The following year, the second LDEI board meeting convened in Chicago.

In 1988 the first LDEI annual meeting was held in Philadelphia. The tradition of annual meetings hosted by rotating Les Dames cities continues. In 2007, the group met in Dallas, and will gather in Hawaii in 2008. Members of LDEI include chefs, restaurateurs, cookbook authors, food journalists and historians, wine professionals, food publicists, and culinary educators. The late Julia Child was a founding member, and membership includes such familiar names in the culinary world as Marcella Hazan, Lidia Bastianich, Gale Gand, Florence Fabricant, Marion Nestle, and Alice Waters.

The LDEI Colorado chapter was formed in 2003 and is one of the most recent to create a philanthropic and educational program to support aspiring chefs, sommeliers, hotel managers, educators, and administrators in food, beverage, and hospitality professions. LDEI/Colorado also recently launched a scholarship and mentoring program for young women. Fall 2007, as part of a national initiative, the group initiated an educational Green Tables program for fourth-grade students at Fairview Elementary School in northwest Denver, designed to introduce youngsters to gardening, harvesting, and preparing fresh produce.

For additional information and photography downloads, visit the LDEI Colorado website at lesdamescolorado.org, or contact Cathy Kruzic, 303-329-6229.

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