

CHECK IN

BOSTON UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF HOSPITALITY ADMINISTRATION

SUMMER 2006

Celebrating Irish Cuisine

CHEF NOEL MCMEEL RECALLS

A LEGENDARY INFLUENCE

By Patrick Kennedy

Native Dubliner Noel Cullen was a big man who made a bigger impression. Before he passed away in early 2002, the SHA associate professor and certified master chef received dozens of awards, was president of the American Culinary Federation, and published books, such as *Elegant Irish Cooking*, championing the underrated fare of his native Ireland.

The younger chefs Cullen (SED'93) tutored have accomplished plenty since. One of these is Noel McMeel, executive head chef at Castle Leslie in County Monaghan, Ireland. McMeel, who studied under Cullen at Johnson & Wales University in Providence, Rhode Island, has catered celebrity events at the Castle, including Sir Paul McCartney's wedding to model Heather Mills in 2002.

"Noel was so inspirational to me as a chef as well as a human being," said McMeel, who came to Boston University in March to honor Cullen's memory and to promote Irish cuisine. McMeel and five other chefs from Ireland, along with six chefs from the Boston area, served up exemplary dishes at the first annual Gaelic Gourmet Gala, at the Hotel Commonwealth. (See photos and article inside.)

"Modern Irish food," McMeel explained, "is about how you grow your produce... And Ireland has fabulous produce. I mean, it's the Emerald Isle, certainly. We've got fabulous beef, fabulous lamb."

"The skills are there... We didn't [always] have as much skill." McMeel is one of a new breed of Irish chefs, one versed in French and other Continental cookery. In addition to his training at Johnson & Wales, he worked at the Watergate



Hotel in Washington, D.C., under Jean-Louis Palladin. "The skills I've learned [abroad], I've taken them home" and applied them to Irish produce, which today of course encompasses far more than the potatoes of stereotype.

"We were like a poor man's kitchen," McMeel said. "That's changed.... Ireland's off with the Celtic Tiger," the name given the country's economic boom of the last ten or so years. "It's feasible now to open a restaurant where people spend from 150 to 250 euros on a night, per person. And it certainly is a gourmet destination.

"What Americans [picture], from the pint of Guinness and the oldish man, Paddy, sitting in the corner drumming away — they are few and far between."

Noel Cullen played a large role in this transformation. "First and foremost," said McMeel, "as

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PHOTOGRAPH: LEN RUBENSTEIN

From the Dean

Dear Friends,

We've had another outstanding year at the School of Hospitality Administration, and there is much to report on: Commencement, student accomplishments, alumni events, a strategic plan, and of course, our new home.

On May 14, we had a wonderful Commencement, with eighty-eight students graduating. This class was among our best, and some awards were especially noteworthy. Meredith Abrams received the Leadership Award from the Boston University Alumni, and Ernest Clarke received the Scarlet Key Award. Academic success overall transferred well to job placement. Nearly all students seeking positions received offers before graduation.

The rise of our School has been meteoric. To sustain this growth and further strengthen our position, a strategic plan for continued long-term success is under way. With some of the best minds in the industry, including our faculty and Advisory Board, collaborating on such a project, our future is bright.

This past semester, we had two successful alumni events. At Winterfest, BU's new winter alumni weekend, the School rented the Top Row suite at the new Agganis arena to watch the men's ice hockey team. SHA faculty, alumni, and students all witnessed a decisive 5-0 victory over Merrimack. On March 15, the first annual Gaelic Gourmet Gala was held at the Hotel Commonwealth, drawing more than 300 alumni, friends, and industry leaders. This gathering of master and celebrity chefs from Ireland and Boston showcased the finest culinary offerings from their respective traditions to benefit the SHA Capital Campaign. The gala was held in memory of the late Noel Cullen, acclaimed Irish master chef and a faculty member at SHA for over a decade, during which he taught and inspired hundreds of hospitality and culinary students. It was a truly wonderful night for the University and the School.

The renovations to our new facility are well under way. As we go to press, the SHA Capital Campaign has raised \$3.69 million of the \$4.5 million goal. Even though we will open the doors in the fall, we will still need funds to complete the campaign.

As we move into our new home, I want to thank all of you again who stepped up and made your contribution to help make this happen. We are very grateful for your support. If you have not made your gift yet, I encourage you to do so; there is still room for your name on the Alumni Center plaque, which marks the alumni group gift. I also hope that if you can, you will visit us in our new home and/or attend one of the many alumni events planned for this coming academic year.

Sincerely,

James T. Stamas, Dean



Celebrating Irish Cuisine, continued from front page

a chef and an Irish person." Cullen wasn't only a gregarious spirit and a kind, effective teacher; he worked hard to blow away the conception of Irish cuisine as an oxymoron. To put together *Elegant Irish Cooking*, for example, he and a photographer borrowed a fish van and toured Ireland collecting recipes for a grueling three weeks, before even securing a publishing contract. Cullen "walked the talk," said McMeel. "I learned by example from Noel. If I die in the morning, at least if I'm able to die a quarter of the man that he was in the culinary end, I would be very, very happy."

March's gala at the Hotel Commonwealth, McMeel said, was a fitting tribute. "It was fantastic; it was a marvelous event. To be able to showcase a bit of Ireland in a modern time, especially with what Noel had been trying to do for many, many, many years, to let people know that Ireland is a gourmet country — not for corned beef and cabbage, which is very much old history."

The gathering showed, Cullen's former pupil noted, that "Noel certainly lives on." 🍷



Noel McMeel explains his potato and herb cake pudding to Abalgeal Hendron.



Under Way

In May, Dean James Starnas led a group of SHA Advisory Board members and staff through the building at 928 Commonwealth Avenue for a peek at the blueprints and initial construction of SHA's new facility. After gutting the building, which included removing the central staircase, builders installed interior metal frames for all rooms on the building's three floors. Construction continues throughout the summer for the School's official opening, planned for September.



CONSTRUCTION ON SHA'S NEW HOME



News & Notes

Anna Briskman (CGS'00, SHA'02) of Chicago, Ill., is the development events assistant at the Field Museum in Chicago. Previously, Anna worked for Celebrity Cruise Lines in Palm Beach, Florida. E-mail her at annabriskman@yahoo.com.

Erica Goldberg ('02) is the general manager of the Academy Ocean Grille, www.academyoceangrille.com. Erica can be reached there at 508-240-1585.

Adrienne Poprik Hodges ('01) of Shelby, N.C., and Jamie Hodges were married on August 21, 2005, at the Morehead Inn in Charlotte, N.C. Adrienne and Jamie met at Wake Forest Law School and both practice law in North Carolina. **Roger Wong** ('01) and **Laura Cuzzocrea** (CAS'01) attended the wedding.

Kristina Lucas ('02) of Baltimore, Md., married **Scott Lute** (CAS'01) on August 27, 2005. E-mail them at kristina.lute@renaissancehotels.com.

Sheri Saperstein Richberg ('96) recently created and launched the integrated marketing services firm Sugar Strategies. For more information about Sugar Strategies or to reconnect with Sheri, please call 508-309-3177. The Sugar Strategies Web site, www.sugarstrategies.com, is currently in development.

Jaime Smith Stickler ('00) of Weymouth, Mass., and her husband, Alan Stickler, welcomed their first child, Elliott Beryl, on September 2.

Roger Wong ('01) of Stoneham, Mass., founded Boston Young Active Hands, a program that connects youth and families with volunteer opportunities. The program is affiliated with the nonprofit organization Boston Cares. Roger also plans to travel to Rwanda as part of a human rights delegation. E-mail him at rog.wong@gmail.com.

Send us your news at tdennehy@bu.edu

Limited offer: The space on the Alumni Center group gift plaque is filling quickly. To include your name, please contact Tom Dennehy at 617-353-1011 or tdennehy@bu.edu to make your gift today.

BU's National Society of Minorities in Hospitality chapter brought back four national awards plus three individual scholarships from this year's national conference in Dallas, Texas, held from February 9 to 12. The group successfully defended three of its titles from the previous year, winning awards for best membership drive, best publicity, and highest individual GPA; this year, it also won most-traveled chapter.

In addition, three students — Joy Nowak (CGS'04, SHA'06), Heather Schell (SHA'09), and Justin Yu (SHA'07) — were awarded academic scholarships by participating hotel and restaurant companies.

BU's chapter is one of the largest in the country. While NSMH was founded initially to help minority students, membership is open to all.

Gastronomically Grand

Years ago, an American traveled to Ireland. Sitting down to eat in his hotel's restaurant, he scanned the menu and asked the waiter, "What would you recommend?"

The waiter looked at the man seriously and replied: "Nothing."

That was in the early 1970s, said Dorchester photographer Harry Brett, recounting a friend's story in between bites of more modern fare at the first annual Gaelic Gourmet Gala, at the Hotel Commonwealth. Irish cooking today? "It's come a long way."

At the March gala, Brett and more than 300 other guests sampled black truffle fondue with pig's feet, potato and herb cake with black pudding, apple and ginger chutney on duck, smoked salmon and cucumbers on brown bread, and other delicacies served by six master chefs from Ireland, as well as six chefs from the Boston area.

The lineup, which Dean James Stamas likened to that of a major-league all-star team, consisted of, from Ireland, Kevin Dundon, Dunbrody Country House Hotel and Cookery School, County Wexford; Darina Allen, Ballymaloe House and Cookery School, County Cork; Richard Hart, Glenlo Abbey Hotel, County Galway; David McCann, Dromoland Castle Hotel, County Clare; Neven Maguire, MacNean House & Bistro, County Cavan; and Noel McMeel, Castle Leslie, County Monaghan; and from Boston and nearby, Michael Schlow, Radius, Via Matta, Great Bay; Ken Oringer, Clio, Uni, Toro; Barbara Lynch, No. 9 Park, B&G Oysters, The Butcher Shop; Marc



Orfaly, Pigalle, Marco; Jasper White, Summer Shack; and Seth and Angela Raynor, The Pearl, Boarding House.

Hosted by the School of Hospitality Administration, the Boston Irish Tourism Association, and Hotel Commonwealth and sponsored by Tourism Ireland, American

Airlines, *Boston* magazine, Tourism Massachusetts, and Costa Fruit & Produce, the event honored the memory of SHA Associate Professor Noel Cullen (SED'93) and highlighted the new Irish cuisine — homegrown organic ingredients prepared with Continental know-how and flair.

While a harpist filled the hotel's elegant ballroom with traditional tunes, attendees nibbled, sipped, and chatted. They also bid on silent-auction items, including a trip to Ireland, Aranware pottery, and a Boston Bruins hockey jersey signed by the entire team. The auction raised funds for SHA's new home at 928 Commonwealth Avenue.

SHA students, such as Talia Kornfeld ('08), assisted master chefs for the evening. "It's been really great," Kornfeld said. "I've learned a lot and had fun doing it."

Gesturing around the room, hotel partner Frank Keefe said, "This is not your typical St. Patrick's Day party!"

— PK



The chefs: from left, Noel McMeel, David McCann, Richard Hart, Darina Allen, Neven Maguire, Kevin Dundon, Michael Schlow, Marc Orfaly, Barbara Lynch, Angela and Seth Raynor, and Jasper White.



Chef Richard Hart serves Doctors Lisa Scarfo (MED'94) and Wayne Saltsman (MED'97).



Harpist Michele Pinet strums an air.



Dean James Stamas with SHA student volunteers, from left, Maggie Blackaby ('07), Justin Yu ('07), Tracy Bender ('08), Sandy Wang ('08), Tracy Fronte ('08), Patricia Ramsey ('08), and Jonathan Jaeger ('08).



Chefs, from left, Noel McMeel, Richard Hart, Michael Schlow, and David McCann chat at the end of a full evening.



From left, Christopher Shannon (CAS'89), Elizabeth Shannon, director of BU's International Visitors Program and advisor of the Trustee Scholars Program, and Chef Darina Allen.

COMMENCEMENT 2006

Check In

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On May 14, eighty-eight members of the SHA Class of 2006 graduated, nearly a third with honors. Dean James Stamas conferred diplomas at the Tsai Performance Center. Noteworthy awards included a Scarlet Key Award to Ernest Clarke and a Boston University Alumni Leadership Award to Meredith Abrams.

Happy members of the SHA Class of 2006, in front, Scott Gordon; back row, from left, Rachel Klebanoff, Robin Freeman, Alex Friedman, and Aya Fukai

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COMMENCEMENT PHOTOS, INC.



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Check In is a winner of a CASE 2006 Communication Silver Award.



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