



## Le Gala de Cuisine: It takes all year to put together



Kethi Sheridan of Something Chocolate displays her chocolate almond torte, lemon almond torte and new peanut butter almond torte. She will make 2,000 miniature tortes of these kinds for Le Gala de Cuisine.

By Ethel Simmons  
staff writer

**I**N THE SPRING, one's thoughts may turn to anticipation of Le Gala de Cuisine, the fabulous, food-tasting event held annually at Cranbrook School in Bloomfield Hills.

Bright green and yellow invitations have been mailed out, and tickets are going fast, to the fund-raiser scheduled from 3 to 7 p.m. Sunday, May 6.

At Le Gala, colorful yellow and white tents accent the Cranbrook School Quadrangle, where appetizers and desserts are served. Gala-goers may sit in the fresh air, talking and eating at tables covered with cloths of daffodil yellow.

In the school's art-deco, wood-paneled dining room, crisp white cloths adorn the tables that hold entrees presented by 13 of some 40 topflight chefs participating in Le Gala.

IT ONLY TAKES a few hours to gorge oneself on the delicious dishes at Le Gala, but it takes an entire year of planning to pull the party together.

Judy Trunsky of West Bloomfield is chairwoman for the second year in a row (each chairwoman serves two years, with the second year's responsibility including training another chairwoman to follow).

She has a son at Cranbrook and a daughter and son who have graduated from Cranbrook and Kingswood schools. To serve on a committee, one must have children in school there.

Working on Le Gala is so enjoyable, "No one wants to leave," Trunsky said of the committee members. "My job is to make sure that my, and all these other, jobs are functioning," is how she describes the overall chairmanship.

Trunsky started working on the event "before it was Le Gala," back in 1979, when a fund-raiser was suggested by the school's headmaster. A cocktail party was given the first year. Then, in 1980, Le Gala de Cuisine got under way, at the suggestion of Audrey Weinberg, who had attended a Detroit Institute of Arts benefit on the Henry Ford estate where "chefs had prepared wonderful things," Trunsky said.

THE CRANBROOK Mothers Association, sponsors of the benefit, contacted the Michigan Chefs Association and Le Gala was born. "Michigan has one of the finest chefs associations in the world," Trunsky said. "It has won an award for the finest. Talk about fine chefs, we have them."

Most of the participating chefs at Le Gala belong to the chefs association. "We don't just take any old chef, you know," she said. "We only take the finest. There are some chefs we turn down."

For Trunsky, the event is a year-round activity and she works on it even

in the summer. "It's a full-time commitment during the school year," she said.

Planning next year's party begins the day after Le Gala closes. Trunsky said the first thing is to reserve the date for the following year and to reserve the buses that bring guests from nearby parking lots up to the Quad. Reserving tables for all the chefs, as well as tables and chairs for outdoors, comes next. "We take every available table and chair at Cranbrook," she said.

This year Le Gala is selling 1,200 tickets, 200 more than last year. "Last year we returned many requests for tickets," Trunsky said. "Ticket prices are \$100 per person, \$125 for patron, \$150 for benefactor."

EACH TICKET includes the food, wine (there is also a cash bar), and a copy of Le Gala de Cuisine's annual spiral-bound cookbook of recipes from the participating chefs. "This year it's a scratch and sniff cookbook," Trunsky said. "It's darling."

Many of Le Gala's guests view the afternoon as a time to break out their spring finery, and the event has gathered the image of being a place to be and see the fashionably dressed. But, Trunsky points out, "It's never been an exclusive party. We send a ticket to anyone who asks for one."

Because it rained at Le Gala last year, the party was moved indoors. Many guests enjoyed their first opportunity to see the school, and chefs liked having more individualized areas, many of these in separate classrooms.

This year, the Quad and dining room will be used as usual but also the Academic Building for appetizers. If it rains desserts will be spread out in another part of the school, Page Hall. Rain or shine, the school will be open for guests to tour.

Preparations for Le Gala are in the hands of a number of important committees. The food committee contacts the chefs and arranges for them to prepare a dish of their choice. If too many entrees are suggested, the chef is asked if the dish might be served as an appetizer. Or the chef might be told, "We're running low on desserts."

USUALLY, A participating chef serves up something different every year, but a few do have specialties they bring back more than once. Christopher Angelosante from the Apple Teaser does a different souffle each year, Ray Schwartz of the Pontchartrain Wine Cellars does escargot and Mike J. Agius of the Plum Hollow Gold Club does rack of lamb.

Trunsky said Le Gala's committees start having meetings in the fall, and she has monthly meetings with the chairs of the committees. Tennis ordered in the fall, must be the same size as the previous ones, as special stakes are permanently installed in the



Chef Heinz Mengusor of the Lark in West Bloomfield shows the Acadian peppered shrimp and spareribs he will prepare on a mesquite barbecue at Cranbrook's sumptuous food fest.

ground at Cranbrook School.

Flowers and plants that add a spring touch to the event come along in the last planning stage. To defray expenses, orders are taken at the Cranbrook School Mothers Tea for the plants used at Le Gala, which are picked up the day after the party.

ALL THE workers on Le Gala are volunteers and include not only women from the Mothers Council but also representatives from the Dads Club, the alumni, faculty, students and staff.

Parents, faculty, staff at school and students save us hundreds of dollars in labor," Trunsky said. The day of Le Gala, "Students help us clean up and polish the school."

The chefs donate their work, and Cranbrook pays for some of the food. Chefs usually arrive at the event two to four hours ahead, but some even show up the day before to begin preparations.

Any special equipment they need is provided by Le Gala. The chefs only have to let the committee know ahead of time what they require in the way of

equipment, from a special oven for souffles to a deep fryer for crullers.

"The food goes into the boys' school kitchen right off the dining room," Trunsky said. School chefs Jerry Rubino and Marianne Badano, his assistant, manage the kitchen that day, along with a chef's helper from the Michigan Chefs Association.

Bill Powell, who is in charge of maintenance, is the man who knows what to do if the power should go out. It did once at Le Gala, but for only two minutes. Everything is checked carefully, right down to every extension cord, to make sure the voltage is adequate, "so the whole place doesn't blow up," Trunsky said.

MOST OF THE food preparation is done ahead of time, so only last-minute things are done by the chefs at Le Gala. "They all fit into the kitchen, and we keep an even flow of things coming out of the kitchen," she said. "Many have steam plates so things stay hot."

Trunsky said some Gala-goers claim

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