

CHICAGO GOURMETS CELEBRATES ITS 20th ANNIVERSARY!

Come Celebrate the Food, Wine and Camaraderie of Fine Dining

Do you enjoy the savory delights of the table, the bubbles in a glass (or two or three) of fine champagne, quaffing great wines, and the *joie de vivre* of sharing these with people of similar tastes and experiences? Chicago Gourmets—the popular dining club—is now celebrating its 20th Anniversary with a roster of events, from the Anniversary Celebration being held at Tallgrass Restaurant in Lockport to the Provençal dinner held in September at Chicago's first culinary bookstore, Read It and Eat, in Lincoln Park.

Twenty years ago Don Newcomb (retired Chair of the Ornamental Horticulture Department at Triton College in River Grove) developed a concept to introduce Chicago-area foodies to the remarkable diversity of restaurant options in Chicagoland. Newcomb envisioned an organization to explore new restaurants, new dining trends, introduce new chefs and authors, and provides a vehicle for new friendships among food-lovers. Chicago Gourmets was born! The first event was held at Crofton on Wells. Since then Chicago Gourmets has held events at more than 800 restaurants throughout the city and beyond.

The many events have included: feasting at Charlie Trotter's famed restaurant, with Charlie providing commentary, where the dinner was so popular that the event took over the entire restaurant; for a luscious feast of unique Turkish specialties at Cafe Orchid; and a lavish Greek dinner at Greek Islands highlighted by commentary about a new Greek exhibit at both the Field Museum and the Hellenic Museum.

Chicago Gourmets often provides an educational element to the event. For example guests learned how to pair sake with Asian/Fusion dishes under the guidance of TV star/chef Ming Tsai and chef/owner of the eponymous Takashi Restaurant. Or prominent guests such as author/teacher Anne Willan (La Varenne French Cooking School) discussing French cuisine, while enjoying dinner prepared by Chef Roland Liccioni at Les Nomades in Streeterville.

Guests may also be introduced to new culinary books by chefs such as Alpana Singh, Paul Virant, Ming Tsai, Alice Waters, and Patricia Wells. Events range from the casual (such as the Spitzberger dinner created by the Hearty Boys and Gale Gand) to a multicourse classic French-cuisine dinner (at George Trois in Winnetka, offering with three wine flights, Wagyu beef in a foie gras sauce, and ending with a Grand Marnier Soufflé.

The uniqueness of the dining experiences is what is most treasured by members, though meeting new friends with similar interests is also high on the list. Newcomb receives ample assistance from his many friends in the restaurant industry. Members receive weekly newsletters and frequent updates on coming events, as well as discounts for most events.

Chicago Gourmets also reaches out to other culinary organizations, issuing invitations to the Culinary Historians of Chicago, Les Dames d'Escoffier, Green City Market (of which Newcomb was one of the founders), the American Institute of Wine and Food, and others.

Add enrichment to your life and explore the luscious delights of “breaking bread” at the fun-filled events of Chicago Gourmets! New members are encouraged to join online at www.chicagourgourmets.org, or by sending their check for \$45 per household for membership to: Chicago Gourmets, Attn: Treasurer, P.O. Box 4152, Oak Park, IL 60303.