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## Noel Cullen

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**CULLEN, Dr. Noel C.** (1947-2002) chef, academic, author, born 30<sup>th</sup> December 1947 in Dublin's Moore Street. Noel was the third of five children born to Thomas Cullen (labourer) and Elizabeth (née Keeley). His career combined equal parts culinary arts, administration, research, publication and pedagogy. Cullen became the first person in the world to hold both a doctoral degree and certified master chef qualifications.

Dr. Cullen began his apprenticeship at the age of 13 in the Charcoal Grill Dublin. He furthered his training in the Gresham Hotel and from 1964 in the old Jury's Hotel in Dame Street, Dublin, where under the tutelage of Chef Willy Widmere, 'a wonderful Swiss culinary taskmaster' (his own words), he qualified as a chef in 1968. He worked as Chef de Partie, Saucier, in the Café Royal in London before returning to Ireland in 1969 to work first as Head Chef in the Skellig Hotel in Dingle during the filming of 'Ryan's Daughter', and later the John D. Carroll contract catering organisation. For a number of years he spent his holidays cooking for Lord Mountbatten in his holiday home in County Sligo. He returned to the Dublin College of Catering where he studied and gained the City and Guilds of London 706/3 (advanced cookery course for industry chefs) in 1977. Jimmy Kilbride, who was his instructor on the 706/3 programme, remembers Noel as an exceptionally gifted student, cook and individual. Cullen credits Kilbride with giving him a new pride as a chef and recognised that the advanced cookery programme made a significant contribution in raising the consciousness and self-awareness of the Irish chefs. Noel spent the years 1977-1981 as Executive Chef in Dublin's Gresham Hotel gaining the 'Savarin' Restaurant a rating in Wedgewoods' top 50 restaurants of the world. Noel was a central figure in reforming the Panel of Chefs of Ireland. Following his election as president of the Panel, he set the wheels in motion for acceptance of the Panel into the World Association of Cooks Societies (WACS) in Frankfurt in 1980. Noel held the position of Executive Chef in Dublin's Berkley Court Hotel (1981-1982), and in The Shelbourne Hotel (1982-1983)

From 1983 to 1987 he worked as a training advisor for CERT (Council for Education, Recruitment, and Training) where he was involved in developing the new national curriculum. From 1987 to 1991 he worked in Johnson & Wales University in Rhode Island, USA, first as Director of Operations, then Dean of Practicum Education and finally as Assistant Professor in the graduate school. During this period he graduated with a Bachelor of Science Degree in 1986, and a Masters of Science degree in

Managerial Technology in 1989, both from Johnson & Wales. He became Associate Professor in Boston University's School of Hospitality Administration in 1990, and he gained his Doctorate in Education in 1992 from Boston University, where he continued to work until his death in 2002.

He won many honours in recognition of his work developing Culinary Arts. Noel's contribution to culinary competitions was legendary. He captained and coached Ireland, America and selected regional teams for many major culinary competitions and International Salons Culinaires. In 1991 he completed the certified master chef examinations in the Culinary Institute of America, becoming one of only 52 master chefs in the United States. He won numerous gold medals and other awards. He was selected as speaker for the Salute to Excellence at the National Restaurant Show in Chicago in 1996, received Le Salon Culinare de Londres Professional Services Award, ACF's 1995 National Educator of the Year, master craftsman in the Craft Guild of Chefs, and was elected as a Fellow of the Epicurean World Master Chefs Society. He was past Chair of the American Culinary Federation Educational Institute, and was elected national President of the American Culinary Federation (ACF) in July 1997 for two terms. In 1997 the Council on Hotel, Restaurant, and Institutional Education (CHRIE) awarded him the Chef Herman Breihaupt Trophy for his outstanding contribution and excellence in hospitality education. He received an Honorary Doctorate of Culinary Arts from Johnson & Wales University in May 2001. An accomplished writer, his research publications include: *Life Beyond the Line: A Front-of-the-House Companion for Culinarians* (2000); *Team Power: Managing Human Resources in the Hospitality Industry* (2001); and *Elegant Irish Cooking: Recipes from the World's Foremost Irish Chefs* (2001). His textbook for chefs, *The World of Culinary Supervision, Training and Management* (1996), is used in many culinary institutions. Noel married Anna Mc Cabe in 1970 and they had one adopted son, Darragh. Anna died of cancer in 1985. Noel re-married Linda Demery in 1987. She died tragically in 1999. Noel died on the 16<sup>th</sup> February 2002 in America.

Interviews with Noel's sister Margaret Rusk, his former lecturer Jimmy Kilbride, colleagues Maura Smyth, Eugene Mc Govern and John Clancy; Information from his son Darragh; ACF Website; Jubilee Stockpot – Panel of Chefs (1983); *Elegant Irish Cooking* (2001)

MÁIRTÍN MAC CON IOMAIRÉ