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## Dr. Noel Cullen: Iconic Chef and Educator

Máirtín Mac Con Iomaire

*Technological University Dublin*, [mairtin.macconiomaire@tudublin.ie](mailto:mairtin.macconiomaire@tudublin.ie)

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Máirtín Mac Con Iomaire Ph.D.  
Dublin Institute of Technology, Mairtin.Macconiomaire@dit.ie

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# DR. NOEL CULLEN...ICONIC CHEF AND EDUCATOR

**Mairtin  
MacConiomaire**



Noel C. Cullen was born in Dublin's Moore Street in 1951. Noel's career was rather exotic, combining 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 packed an inordinate set of achievements into his 38 years experience in the foodservice, hospitality, education, and culinary arts fields. He was a culinarian, chef patron, executive chef, manager, and professor of hospitality administration. He held unique combinations of foodservice, culinary and education degrees, including the Licentiate of the City and Guilds of London Institute, a master's in managerial technology, and a doctorate in education from Boston University. He was executive chef of the finest kitchens in Ireland including those of the Shelbourne Hotel, Dublin, where he managed a staff of 70, and the Gresham Hotel, Dublin. The 'Savarin' restaurant in the Gresham came to be ranked among the world's top 50 under his leadership.

Dr. Cullen began his apprenticeship at the age of 13 in the Charcoal Grill Dublin. He furthered his training in the Gresham Hotel and 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) and he qualified as a chef in 1968. He worked as chef saucier in the Café Royal in London before returning to Ireland in 1970 to work first, as head chef in the Skellig Hotel in Dingle during the filming of 'Ryan's Daughter', and later with the Jury's Hotel Group and the John D. Carroll Contract Catering organisation. He returned to the Dublin College of Catering during this period where he studied and gained the City and Guilds of London 706/3 (advanced cookery course for industry chefs). Jimmy Killbride, who was his instructor on the 706/3 programme remembers Noel as an exceptionally gifted student, cook and individual. Cullen credits Killbride 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. Whilst executive chef in the Gresham Hotel in 1975, he was a cen-

tral figure in reforming the Panel of Chefs of Ireland. Following his election as president of the Panel, in Frankfurt in 1980, he set the wheels in motion for acceptance of the Panel into the World Association of Cooks Societies (WACS).

He became interested in education while helping to develop Ireland's national culinary curricula as an advisor to the Council for Education, Recruitment, and Training (CERT) in the mid-1980s. Concurrently teaching, consulting, cooking, and studying, he built a culinary educator's résumé to complement his professional credentials, earning en route his Masters and his Ed.D. In 1992, Noel's move to America brought him 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 Salon Culinaires. He won numerous gold medals and other awards, among which were his selection as speaker for the 'Salute to Excellence' at the National Restaurant Show in Chicago in 1996, the Le Salon Culinare de Londres Professional Services Award; ACF's 1995 'National Educator of the Year'; master craftsman in the Craft Guild of Chefs; Distinguished Visiting Chef Chair at Johnson and Wales University; and election 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.

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 passed to his heavenly reward in February 2002.

Dr. Noel Cullen Ed.D.,

CMC, AAC, Born Dublin, Ireland 1951, died America February 16, 2002.