

FIU Hospitality Students Get Real Life Experience with Alumnus Chef Allen Susser



JMOF-FIU Executive Director Jo Ann Arnowitz and Chef Allen Susser at An Evening with Chef Allen.



Dining Room.



FIU Hospitality Students with Chef Allen Susser and Chef Michael Moran after a fantastic evening.

It was a mouthwatering experience that left guests with intoxicating dreams of exotic variations on haroset, succulent mushrooms, flavorful Mahi-Mahi, and a chocolate dessert that would soothe any soul... On April 9, 2014, Upper Level JMOF-FIU members and supporters were treated to an exclusive four-course dinner curated by the acclaimed Chef Allen Susser.

The event was held at FIU's Biscayne Bay Campus. Guests were escorted to the Chaplin School of Hospitality and Tourism Management's beautiful new state-of-the-art dining room with its high ceilings, ornate fixtures, and video monitors that ran a presentation of the students preparing for the dinner and a photo montage of past Museum events.

Under the supervision of Lead Instructor Chef Michael Moran, this special dinner was planned, prepared and served by FIU Hospitality students as a training session for the Advanced Food Production Management Course. Each student had a role in the event, either front or back of the house. The team that ran the front of house had to focus on proper service etiquette, while the back of the house team focused on food preparation using Chef Allen's recipes. This evening's class served as a "final exam" for the Student Group Managers: Mauricio Uribe (General Manager), Skylar Siegel (Dining Room Manager), Stephanie Zorrilla (Assistant Dining Room Manager), Kerline St. Proulx (Operations Manager), Viviana Siles (Bakery and Pastry Manager), Jenna Wohl (Kitchen Manager), and Claudia Vera (Assistant Kitchen Manager). In the weeks prior to the event, Chef Allen mentored the students, showing them the proper preparation and presentation of his delectable dishes, created especially for this event.

"We did so much to prepare for this event, but the main thing that we did was to train our front of house and back of house staff, which consisted of our classmates," explained Dining Room Manager, Skylar Siegel, "We spent a lot of time training them on the menu, ingredients and service procedures."

When asked how she felt the evening went, Skylar replied, "I feel that the evening went amazingly well, especially being

that my management group and I had no idea what the printed menus or centerpieces would look like until the day of the event. But the most fun part of the evening for me was having the opportunity to speak to the guests one-on-one, because it was so great to hear their positive feedback. I also thoroughly enjoyed working with Chef Allen and introducing him at the beginning of the event."

Mauricio Uribe, the evening's General Manager, has a lot of experience in the service industry, but this program gave him a special insight into other roles. "I learned about the prep and timing of the meal and the dining room preparation, like folding napkins and placement of silverware. I never had back of the house experience, so this was the best part. The facility has state-of-the-art equipment that I've never seen in most restaurants! Also, Chef Moran was great. He was very approachable."

For many of the students, this was the end of their coursework. After graduation, most plan on pursuing positions at top restaurants or training in specialized leadership programs. For instance, Skylar hopes to take part in Marriott's Voyage MIT/Leadership Development Program. "I just got a great email from them and when I am accepted, I will be sent away to a new unknown location where I will work with the best of the best in the hospitality industry and be molded into the great manager that I know I can be. Upon completion of that program I plan to complete my masters degree while working for Marriott. Overall, I am just so thankful for all that FIU's Chaplin School of Hospitality has taught me and for all of the opportunities that the career services offices have provided me with. It is an amazing program that I will dearly miss."

This intimate Dinner with Chef Allen was offered as part of our series of food related events in conjunction with our current exhibit, *Growers, Grocers & Gefilte Fish*. You can see more photos from this special evening on page 11. If you are hungry for more, our next "foodie" event is Sunday, June 8th with NPR personality, Linda Gassenheimer sharing recipes and smoothies from her latest cookbook *Simply Smoothies* (see pages 12-13).