



LES DAMES D'ESCOFFIER IRELAND

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Seventeen of Ireland's Leading Women in Food and Drink Express Interest in Founding the First Irish Chapter of Les Dames d'Escoffier

Darina Allen and Sally Barnes among the proposed founding members as Les Dames d'Escoffier Ireland prepares to seek a charter from the global society of women in food, drink and hospitality

IRELAND — AUGUST 2026 — Seventeen accomplished women from across the island of Ireland have expressed initial interest in establishing Les Dames d'Escoffier Ireland, an aspiring chapter of Les Dames d'Escoffier International (LDEI), the worldwide philanthropic society of women leaders in food, fine beverage and hospitality.

The proposed founding members reach from West Cork to Belfast and from Clare to Dublin, and span every corner of the industry — chefs and restaurateurs, artisan producers, food writers and a publisher, a whiskey bonder, a fish smoker, a chocolatier and food-tourism leaders. Among them is Darina Allen, founder of the Ballymaloe Cookery School and one of the defining figures of modern Irish food.

With initial interest from more than the fifteen founding members required to petition for a charter, the group is now preparing to submit its formal application to LDEI International. If approved by the LDEI Board and ratified by its Council of Delegates, Les Dames d'Escoffier Ireland would become the organisation's newest chapter — and its first on the island of Ireland — joining a global network of more than 2,600 members.

WHY AN IRISH CHAPTER

Irish women in food, drink and hospitality have long been part of the Les Dames d'Escoffier family through the London chapter, whose welcome to members from across these islands helped carry the organisation's mission to this side of the Atlantic.

Ireland, though, is its own food nation: a sovereign EU member state with its own currency, its own legal and charitable framework, and its own national food institutions — Bord Bia, Fáilte Ireland, Teagasc, the cookery schools and producer networks that shape careers here. And it has its own culinary tradition, a farmhouse and coastal food culture rebuilt over the past half-century, in remarkable measure by women, in dairies, kitchens, market stalls, classrooms and dining rooms across the country.

"An Irish chapter lets us do this in a way that fits the country," said Heather Richie, founding organiser of the chapter. "It means bursaries paid in euro, mentorship inside Irish cookery schools and producer networks, and philanthropy directed where our members live and work, while keeping us part of a network of more than 2,600 Dames worldwide. Ireland is its own food nation, and it's time it had a chapter of its own."

The proposed founding members are: Darina Allen (Ballymaloe Cookery School); Anya Aseeva (Joyce Country Bakery); Sally Barnes (Woodcock Smokery); Stefi Fletcher; Tara Gartlan; Birgitta Hedin-Curtin (Burren Smokehouse); Caroline Hennessy; Kristin Jensen (Nine Bean Rows); Santina Kennedy; Imen McDonnell; Paula McIntyre; Louise McGuane (JJ Corry Irish Whiskey); Barbara Nealon (Saint Francis Provisions); Charlotte Norén (EDŌ & Beau); Eva Pau (Asia Market); Kate Ryan (Flavour.ie); and Heather Richie (Fisher & Farmer).

Women in food, drink and hospitality with at least five years' professional leadership experience who would like to learn more are invited to get in touch at hello@lesdamesireland.org.

ABOUT LES DAMES D'ESCOFFIER IRELAND

Les Dames d'Escoffier Ireland is a group of women leaders in food, fine beverage and hospitality working to establish the first Irish chapter of Les Dames d'Escoffier International. The chapter is in formation and is seeking approval from LDEI International; it is not yet an official chapter. More at lesdamesireland.org.

ABOUT LES DAMES D'ESCOFFIER INTERNATIONAL

Les Dames d'Escoffier International is an invitational philanthropic organisation of women leaders in food, fine beverage and hospitality, with chapters across the world dedicated to education, mentorship and philanthropy.

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