



Founding Group for Ireland's First Les Dames d'Escoffier Chapter Grows to Twenty-Five as Charter Application Nears

Twenty-five women from across Irish food, drink and hospitality now stand behind the aspiring chapter, which will file its application to Les Dames d'Escoffier International at the end of September — and has launched on Instagram

IRELAND — SEPTEMBER 2026 — In little more than a month, the group of women working to found Les Dames d'Escoffier Ireland has grown from seventeen to twenty-five tentative founding members — drawn from every corner of the industry and every part of the island — as the aspiring chapter prepares to file its application to Les Dames d'Escoffier International (LDEI), the worldwide philanthropic society of women leaders in food, fine beverage and hospitality.

The group now intends to submit its formal application to LDEI International at the end of September 2026. 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.

The eight women who have come forward since August broaden the group's reach further still: among them are Emily McCorkell of the Lo & Slo Group in Derry, a chef and food educator who champions Ireland as a place of provenance; Funke Egberongbe, whose FUNKE restaurant brings West African and Caribbean cooking to the north-west; Aoife Shortt Ryan, food buyer for Avoca; and Kathleen Hall Smith, a sommelier and educator who once won a Les Dames d'Escoffier scholarship in New York and has returned to Ireland, in her words, "to give back." They join chefs and publicans, ingredient buyers, food writers and producers from Donegal to West Cork.

The response over the past month has gone beyond anything we hoped for. Women have come forward from every part of the country and every corner of the trade — chefs, producers, writers, buyers and publicans alike. It says a great deal about how ready Ireland is for a chapter of its own.

— Heather Richie, founding organiser of Les Dames d'Escoffier Ireland

NOW ON INSTAGRAM

As it gathers its founding group, the chapter has also launched on Instagram at @lesdamesireland, where it will share its journey toward a charter — the producers, kitchens and gatherings behind the founding of a distinctly Irish chapter — and where women who wish to learn more can follow along.

THE TWENTY-FIVE TENTATIVE FOUNDING MEMBERS

Darina Allen (Ballymaloe Cookery School); Anya Aseeva (Joyce Country Bakery); Sally Ferns Barnes (Woodcock Smokery); Funke Egberongbe (FUNKE Restaurant); Stefi Fletcher (Bar 1661); Tara Gartlan (Tara Gartlan Chocolate); Birgitta Hedin-Curtin (Burren Smokehouse); Caroline Hennessy (Bibliocook); Kristin Jensen (Nine Bean Rows); Santina Kennedy; Natasha Kilcoyne; Emily McCorkell (Lo & Slo Group); Imen McDonnell (Farmette); Louise McGuane (JJ Corry Irish Whiskey); Paula McIntyre; Luana Morandini; Barbara Nealon (Saint Francis Provisions); Charlotte Norén (EDŌ & Beau); Claire O'Halloran; Máire O'Mahony; Eva Pau (Asia Market); Heather Richie (Fisher & Farmer); Kate Ryan (Flavour.ie); Aoife Shortt Ryan (Avoca); and Kathleen Hall Smith.

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, or to follow the chapter on Instagram at [@lesdamesireland](https://www.instagram.com/lesdamesireland).

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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