

Dishing Out History

Cherry Hill intern shares her ancestor's story as Campbell's first executive chef

A Culinary Lifetime

March 25, 1858 -- Louis Charles DeLisle was born in Paris, France.

1870s-1890s -- His jobs included sailmaker in the French navy, busboy, apprentice pastry chef, chef's apprentice, chef on an English passenger ship, hotel chef and private chef to General E. Burd Grubb, diplomat and millionaire.

1880 -- Moved to the United States.

1886 -- Married Mary Murphy. They eventually had three daughters and four sons.

1887 -- Started working at the Franco-American Company in Jersey City, N.J. Also became a U.S. citizen.

1898 -- Campbell began marketing condensed Tomato soup, its first condensed recipe.

1902 -- DeLisle became executive chef at Campbell.

1929 -- Retired from Campbell and was named Chef Emeritus. The French government awarded him the distinguished Cross of the Chevalier du Merite, Agricole.

1938 -- Celebrated his 80th birthday, preparing preserves,

December 8, 2010

History has a way of repeating itself. For General Accounting Intern Michelene Hearey, her family's history with Campbell is never out of sight.

"We have Campbell stuff all over our house," she said. "Posters, spoons, even Campbell Kids soapdish holders." It's a way for the Saint Joseph's University junior and her family to pay homage to her great-great-grandfather -- Campbell's first executive chef.



FAMILY TIES: Michelene Hearey's great-great-grandfather Louis Charles DeLisle was Campbell's first executive chef.

Born in Paris in 1858, Louis Charles DeLisle (pronounced *duh-LEEL*) first served as an apprentice to famous French chefs. When he was 16, he immigrated first to Canada and later to the United States, refining his culinary skills with each move.

After entering some of his soups in a New York food exhibition, he was hired on the spot by the Franco-American Food Company, then the maker of high-end canned French cuisine. In 1902, he became the first chief chef at the Joseph Campbell Preserve Company, renamed the Campbell Soup Company in 1922. Campbell acquired Franco-American in 1921.

DeLisle worked closely with Campbell President Dr. John T. Dorrance, the creator of condensed soup, on preparation methods and recipes, including the formula for Campbell's flagship Tomato soup, which DeLisle called his "godchild." He was featured in company advertising. He also traveled to France every year, where he visited French kitchens and renewed culinary friendships.

Two of DeLisle's seven children, Clement and Raymond, later followed in their father's footsteps at Campbell in administrative and payroll positions.

"When my great-great-grandfather retired in 1929, the company offered him his retirement package or a percentage of the soup sales," Michelene said. "My great-great-grandmother was skeptical that anyone would buy canned soup, so he took the retirement package." Little did she know that condensed soup would soon become Campbell's primary growth engine.

In November of 1929, the French Ministry of Agriculture awarded DeLisle that nation's second-highest honor, the Order of Chevalier du Merite (Knight of Merit), Agricole, for his contributions to promoting French cooking. Renowned chef Auguste Escoffier of the Carlton Hotel in London also earned the award, which entitled the bearer to a tip of the hat in France.

On DeLisle's 80th birthday, Arthur Dorrance -- John Dorrance's younger brother and his successor as Campbell's President -- and Campbell's directors commemorated the chef's accomplishments with a silver tray inscribed with the words: "In recognition of his pioneering efforts in the perfection of Soup Making and of many contributions toward the development of the Culinary Art."

beef stew, chicken salad and other party food for 380 guests.

1956 -- Died in Camden, N.J.



Throughout his retirement, DeLisle never set his love for cooking on the back burner. His passion switched from soups to jams, and he often looked forward to serving the big batches he prepared to friends. He also did his family's cooking, particularly enjoying wild game such as rabbit.

On March 15, 1956, just shy of his 98th birthday, DeLisle died at his longtime home on North Seventh Street in Camden. He left a large collection of Campbell memorabilia to his family.

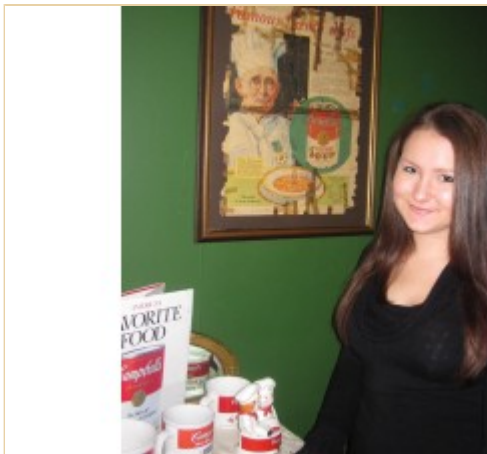
Today, though Michelene isn't tweaking the recipe for *Campbell's* Tomato soup in Research and Development, she is enjoying making her own contributions to the company.

"I love Campbell," she said. "My family has a lot of history here, and it's a great company."

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Images From:



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CULINARY LEGACY: DeLisle came from a family of culinary experts. His father, a police official, had been a chef, as was his grandfather, who fought in Napoleon Bonaparte's military service.



IN GOOD TASTE: According to a retrospective 1952 Campbell internal news story honoring Chef Emeritus DeLisle's 94th birthday, during tomato season he worked from 5 a.m. to 10 p.m., tasting a new batch of soup every seven minutes. "I cannot remain idle," he said. "This is my life, my pleasure."

Vive DeLisle!
 Head Chef Emeritus
 of the Campbell Soup Company



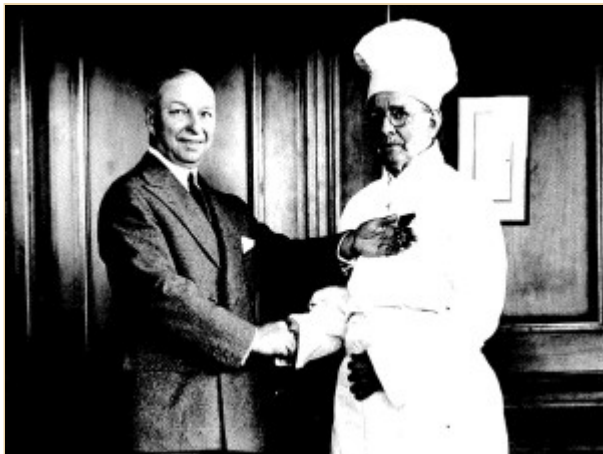
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VIVE DELISLE: France bestowed upon Chef Emeritus DeLisle the Cross of Chevalier du Merite, Agricole, with this statement: "Through many years you have contributed in distinguished degree to the appreciation of the artistry of French cooking throughout the entire civilized world, both by your own services and by the instruction that you have bestowed upon others."



BADGE OF HONOR: The Cross of the Chevalier du Merite included a medal, a certificate and a green-and-red ribbon that could be worn every day. Here, Dr. John T. Dorrance, Campbell's President, congratulates DeLisle on the award.



ALL IN THE FAMILY: Gathered here in an undated photo at a home in Camden, Michelene's family has included (from left) her great-great-aunt Helen DeLisle, great-great-uncle Pete DeLisle, Louis Charles DeLisle, great-great-grandmother Mary Murphy DeLisle, great-great-aunt Margarite DeLisle, great-great-uncle Oliver DeLisle and great-grandmother Josephine DeLisle Hearey.



CAPABLE HANDS: Notice that in most pictures, DeLisle's right hand is hidden. According to one of his great-grandchildren, Jim McKay, the chef lost fingers on that hand during a demonstration of canning equipment.



TRUE LOVE: Louis and his wife, Mary, were married for about seven decades. In 1937, Camden's Courier-Post newspaper quoted him: "We are just as happy and love each other as much as if it was our wedding day."



MANY HAPPY RETURNS: On his 80th birthday, DeLisle received a silver tray from Campbell President Arthur C. Dorrance. "The directors of the company have asked me to remember your birthday with a token of the respect and admiration they feel for you, and also, they hope to make your birthday a little happier," Dorrance said. "Mr. Dorrance," the chef replied, "we shall see you again when I am 90, yes, when I am 100."

Last updated: Dec 08, 2010