

*Each issue of La Toque profiles a member of our Chefs' Council and describes how his or her training and experience combine to form a resource rich with creative ideas for our clients.*

## PROFILE

### Patricia H. Hart

M.S., R.D.



#### Bridging the Culinary and Nutritional Divide

Eating right doesn't mean giving up flavor and taste. That is Patty Hart's philosophy and the reason we invited her to join our Chefs' Council in 1994. She brings to the CCD a unique expertise as both a trained chef and a registered dietitian.

Patty's broad knowledge of nutrition, the culinary arts and even nutraceuticals began with a degree in Medical Technology from the University of Florida in 1974. It continued to grow as she attained a degree from the Culinary Institute of America in 1983, and an M.S. in Food Science and Human Nutrition in 1990, also from the University of Florida.

From these educational experiences it was clear to Patty that a necessary connection was missing. **"In cooking school, we didn't talk much about nutrition, and in nutrition school we didn't talk about food. A mango was just a delivery system for Vitamin C."**

Her effort became to bring the two aspects of her interest together, and to this end she landed herself the opportunity to develop programs for California's Department of Education. There she trained school cooks in the creation of healthy and tasty food. The success of this program was so great that it has been included in the USDA's Team Nutrition program, which is a multi-faceted program designed to instill healthy eating habits in school children from a young age.

Ever curious and always enthusiastic Patty has broadened her scope of all things nutritional and tasty to include Eastern systems of medicine and herbology. In her mind these systems are on the forefront of how foods can act as medicine in the burgeoning field of nutraceuticals.

Because she has so successfully synthesized the culinary and nutritional aspects of food and continues to carve out new paths on the food frontier, Patty has become a popular teacher, author and lecturer at both a local and national level.

#### Discovering Food

"My first food memory is of being in the kitchen with my grandmother. On Fridays she made chopped liver and I was her taste tester, telling her how much salt, pepper, and schmaltz to add.

But Patty's real affair with food began when she moved to Boston from Florida. In Boston she discovered foods that she had never seen before. They included a range of ethnic cuisines such as Sichuan. "Since my background was chemistry, I would go home and recreate the new dishes I was discovering by thinking of them as chemistry experiments. That's when I first started making a bridge between science and cooking."

#### A Life-Changing Dinner

"A date took me to eat at Madeleine Kamman's restaurant, Modern Gourmet, in Newton, MA. It was the most incredible experience - lobster quenelles (think puréed lobster and beaten egg white). I'd never had anything like that texture before - such creaminess yet such vibrant flavor. I went to see her the next day and told her I wanted to change careers and become a chef. She was just moving her school to France, so suggested I go to the CIA. "The what?!" I cried. She meant the Culinary Institute of America. So I went."

A few years after graduating from the CIA Patty attended Ms. Kamman's school in France and then went onto Germany where she "promptly fell in love." She spent a year in Germany cooking for the Canadian army, but when her father fell ill and had open heart surgery, she returned to the states. "Unfortunately, my love did not."

#### Can Hospital Food Taste Good?

"My father's hospital diet was quite an eye-opener - so bland and boring." Patty learned that dietitians were the keepers of hospital food, and so she decided to become one. She enrolled in the Masters of Food Science and Nutrition program at the University of Florida and then interned at Shands Hospital in Gainesville. "I was staggered by the number of meals, 6000, put out daily." And that's when she began to experience first hand the differences between commercial and non-commercial food service.

As she puts it, "In commercial food service the primary focus is on profitability of the food. It is customer driven and motivated by flavor. In most non-commercial food service situations: hospitals, schools, prisons and transportation services, nutrition and sanitation are the main concerns leaving taste at the bottom of the list. Moreover, chefs in the non-commercial realm of food service are not necessarily trained in cooking."

Such was the case for the US Coast Guard. Like many cooks in these areas of food service, "No one had ever taught these people how to hold, sharpen, or cut with a knife, let alone how to add taste." The Coast Guard cooks learn basic cooking and focus on sanitation through their regular training "...then I come along and teach them taste and nutrition."

And so Patty began to train US Coast Guard cooks at their Petaluma training center as she still does 4 or 5 times a year.

#### Nutraceuticals

Going to the chiropractor or acupuncturist, taking echinacea when feeling a cold coming on, or looking for herbal alternatives to pharmaceuticals is commonplace now, but it hasn't always been that way.

Given her interest in herbal remedies Patty closely follows its progress. "It was about 3 years ago that the Commission E report (the German equivalent of the FDA) on herbal remedies was translated. Since then research on alternative therapies has grown considerably in this country, even garnering a \$50 million budget at the National Institute of Health."

As the Western world begins to take serious interest in Eastern medicine and dietary habits, food companies here are beginning to see new opportunities. But the question of just how effective and what the long term effects of these products are is still being answered.

#### What's Their Efficacy?

"Nutraceuticals are often weak medications, and the truth is that we just don't know much about their efficacy. The efficacy of many of these products depends not only on quantity consumed, but the frequency of consumption, and the form in which the nutraceutical is taken. For example, these substances can come in the form of a tea, tincture, or powder. Additionally, some herbs must be cycled, while others may not be good in combination with other medications. For instance, echinacea boosts the immune system, but if you take it every day it will lose its effect. And the NIH now says that if you're taking blood thinners you should stay away from ginkgo biloba."

"We Boomers don't want to age, we want to stay healthy."



Nowhere is this more evident than in new products. A good example of this is in the area of vision. Lutein is a phytochemical, a naturally occurring plant-based nutrient, that seems to enhance vision. "You are going to start noticing more foods with lutein in them. Betacarotene, a precursor to Vitamin A, runs around together with the vitamin. Without Vitamin A you really do start losing your night vision."

### In the Spotlight

According to Patty there are several items that stand out amongst the sea of nutraceuticals. Here are a few that she believes will become more and more a part of consumers' lifestyles. Folic acid is a vitamin that assists in reducing levels of homocystein (an amino acid). It stands in the forefront because high levels of homocystein are believed to indicate a high risk of heart disease. Many believe folic acid levels to be more predictive than cholesterol levels.

Omega 3's and Omega 6's are beginning to get a little attention in the press and on packaging. They are polyunsaturated fats found in walnuts, flaxseed oil and some fish, and have proven beneficial in lowering cholesterol, reducing platelet stickiness and inflammation.

And then there is glucosamine which is making a strong appearance. On the market now is a beverage called "Joint Juice" laying claim to relief from joint pain due to the ingredient glucosamine. What isn't known about this substance is whether or not other nutrients interfere with its absorption into the body or what constitutes a proper dosage.

And finally there is soy. "Soy represents a tremendous opportunity in the food industry. CBS MarketWatch reported that by 2005 soy milk sales should hit the \$1 billion mark, from the current \$420 million, while total soy



From left to right: Flax seed oil capsules, a source of omega 3's, Herbal cereal with ginger and fennel to aid in healthy digestion, Yin Chiao an herbal preventative, Green Tea as an Anti-Oxidant, Gizo "kava shooter" for relaxation and focus, and Nurana which contains kola nut, guarana and green tea for energy. Front: Soup mixture of dry abalone, lycii, dioscorea, lilly bulb and lotus seed to aid in overall health.

food sales would hit \$6 billion."

### Mainstreaming Nutrition

"When the Food Pyramid and the USDA Dietary Guidelines came out in the '90s, nutrition was no longer just for dietitians; it was for the public. The food label came out and people read it. They may not have understood what it all meant but they read about calories and fat content.

**I do think there is good reason to fortify foods. I had 40 California Culinary Academy students every month, and I had each one of them keep a food diary for a day and do a nutritional analysis. Less than one percent came close to the food guidelines."**

Food companies everywhere are eager to include these substances in their products. Even something as commonplace as calcium. "They hear that women are deficient in calcium and iron and now calcium is in a lot of foods. But is it possible that if calcium is added to everything I eat, that I might get too much? Yes, I could."

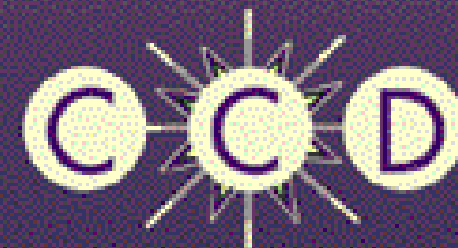
### Delivery Systems

"Beverages and energy bars have both proven to be successful delivery systems for nutraceuticals. Cereals we also see as a delivery system. But gum is a great and underutilized delivery system. And then, of course, there is chocolate . . ."

Tapping into what America eats and translating it into mainstream products is the hallmark of The Center. Using an outside culinary perspective helps our clients to develop delicious, exciting new products. For more information on our unique approach please contact us at 415.693.8900.

# The Power of Taste

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