



FROG COMMISSARY CELEBRATES 40 YEARS

This year marks the 40th anniversary of our partner Frog Commissary's founding. Building on Steve Poses' legacy of innovative restaurants, Frog Commissary has continued to reinvent itself decade after decade while redefining dining here at The Franklin Institute and elsewhere. These days, Poses has turned management of the company over to his wife Christina Sterner, a highly accomplished arts executive, though he continues to guide and protect its deeply rooted vision. We spoke with both of them about this special milestone.

Illuminations: How has Frog Commissary evolved over 40 years?

Christina: Frog and the many restaurants Steve owned and operated in the 1970s through the 1990s created a distinct identity for us—the passion of the pioneer! We continue to cater events, but we also provide dining services for the Institute, and that's a sea change from the little 17th Street storefront where we started. I'm so proud of what Steve gave to this city. He was always driven by a very pure motive: to bring people together with great food.

How have the early restaurant days informed the company culture?

Steve: For me, it always goes back to activist Jane Jacobs' writings about how a candy store could create a sense of community. Everything I've done, from Frog through the restaurants we ran at the Mann Center to now, has been about trying to bring people together.

C: Philadelphia dining was very limited in the 1970s and Steve's restaurants changed everything. He awakened our palates—no, he created our palates—and democratized taste. Now there are eateries on every corner and all of us, of all ages are "foodies" of some kind but Frog Commissary aims to inspire that original sense of wonder and discovery, for our staff and for our clients.

What sets you apart?

C: Our personal approach in the way we run our business and interact with our clients. We don't have corporate layers, which means we can problem-solve or develop ideas and put it into action with immediacy. We pride ourselves on critical thinking and an open, collaborative exchange among talented staff from our own ranks as well as The Franklin Institute.

And most importantly, our great food!

What are your best event memories?

S: The 1986 Jambalaya Jam, which was held when Penn's Landing's Great Plaza was just opening. There was no

playbook for feeding 45,000 people over three days with no kitchen, but we did it and we made incredible food. The audacity of that always amazes me! But every event is special, whether it's a book party, or 2000 people dining at The Franklin Institute—we care equally about each of them.

C: In my former career, [Sterner was Mikhail Baryshnikov's business and producing partner for 20 years] I attended memorable events around the world—too many to count. But one of the best was the gala opening of the Baryshnikov Arts Center in 2007—my last and most important project with the organization—I sat with my soon-to-be husband Steve and savored the moment!

What are the most valuable lessons you've learned?

C: Trust your instincts. Surround yourself with the most talented people. Never rest on your laurels. The feeling of success is momentary—think about how you can be better, and stay on course.

What's the best meal you've ever served?

S: Our best meal was when we got married in Pepper Hall—Frog Commissary did a wonderful job. (See menu.)

From your perspective, what has made Frog Commissary and The Franklin Institute's longstanding relationship so special?

S: As far as I know, it's unique in the industry for an institution as large as TFI to work with a single provider over so many years. We have a wonderful partnership with a tremendous amount of mutual respect and trust.

What lies in store for the next 40 years?

C: We're looking forward to the opening of the Nicholas and Athena Karabots Pavilion, the conference center it will house, and opportunities for further collaboration with the Institute. We now have the Institute's beautiful Pepper Hall, rarely available before, in our roster of permanent event spaces. We're also planning to reboot Franklin Foodworks, and connect the new *Your Brain* exhibit with *Kitchen Science*.

S: We're always focused on tomorrow. You're only as good as your last meal.

To reserve Pepper Hall or another space at the Institute for your next event, please contact Lois Switken in the Sales and Catering Department at (215) 448-1275. 2014 wedding dates are available.



Christina & Steve's Wedding Celebration

Peekytoe crab dumplings
Smoke salmon "blintzes"
Deviled quail eggs with
Missouri Hackleback caviar
Seared tuna "tataki" with black olive tapenade
Braised duck leg springrolls
Cream of roasted chestnut soup
Fried oysters with red pepper-ginger marmalade

Dinner

Beet "Heart" & Goat Cheese
Pink Peppercorns, White Truffle Honey

Morels & Foie Gras

Wild Mushroom "Tea"
2006 Quartz Reef Pinot Noir
Central Otago New Zealand

Toasts: Paul Georg Blanc de Blanc
Champagne

Lobster & Pumpkin

2003 Kooyong Chardonnay
Mornington Peninsula, Australia

Braised Veal

Creamy Polenta, Swiss Chard
Caramelized Belgian Endive

2005 Domingo de Atauta
Ribera del Duero, Spain

Wedding Cake

Lemon Curd & Candied Lemon
Blackberries, Cranberries & Port

Chocolates

Pierre Marcolini, Belgium
Michael Recchuiti, San Francisco

Frog Commissary Cookies

American Artisan Cheese
Humboldt Fog · Maytag Blue
Bandaged Cheddar

Dessert Wines & Homemade Liqueurs

1999 Felsina Vin Santo
2003 Les Pins Chateau Tirecul
Limoncello · Star Anisette

Steve's Lavender

(from the Khellas' garden) Ice Cream
Bittersweet chocolate, candied lavender

Frog Commissary Catering
Pepper Hall at The Franklin Institute
November 29, 2008