

# Prologue

Born in Charolles, a small town in the Burgundy region of France, Marc Sarrazin was raised in his family's restaurant. At sixteen, Sarrazin left school to learn the trade of a butcher. He apprenticed in French butcher shops before moving to Bermuda and then, in 1953, New York, where he worked at El Morocco restaurant, a popular Manhattan nightclub. Sarrazin's passion was working with meat which led him to pursue a job with Debragga and Spitler, a reputable distributor of quality meats. In 1954, he was hired by Paul Spitler who recognized Sarrazin's potential and placed him in their sales department. By 1972, Sarrazin was president of the company. "My father was great at maintaining and developing relationships," explains Marc Sarrazin, Jr., "but he never forgot where he came from and regretted not finishing school."

When Sarrazin joined the company of Debragga and Spitler, it was already aligned with the "finest culinary college"—The Culinary Institute of America. As he rose through the ranks, Sarrazin deepened the relationship between the company and the CIA and became an advocate for the college. His son recalls, "My dad genuinely loved the school. I don't know what it was exactly—the camaraderie maybe. It's a special place and attending the CIA is definitely a labor of love. No one works harder than the students."

In addition to Debragga and Spitler's involvement with the CIA, Sarrazin encouraged several organizations and corporations to support CIA students. He was instrumental in acquiring the first expendable gifts made by the Partridge Invitation Scholarship Foundation and Société Culinaire Philanthropique. Each organization has since contributed thousands of dollars to support scholarships at the CIA.

Not only was Sarrazin a friend of the CIA, he was a friend to chefs around the country and the world. "Marc was probably the leading advocate for American chefs in the U.S.," said Waldy Malouf '75. "He cultivated, nurtured and encouraged American chefs in the best kitchens through his special way of networking. We owe him a great debt."

In a *Nation's Restaurant News* interview, Paul Bocuse, the famed French chef stated, "Marc was a friend to all chefs, and many French chefs in the [United States] owe him."

"He never asked for anything," added Michael LeClerc, who is a chef at Grappa restaurant in Park City, Utah, and was scouted by Sarrazin more than a decade ago.

Sarrazin told *The New York Times* in 1987, "I enjoy working with young people trying to make something of themselves." In his trademark straightforward style, he also added that the placements "don't hurt my business."

In that same article, leading New York chefs including Daniel Boulud of Restaurant Daniel, Charles Palmer of Aureole and Jean-Georges Vongerichten

of Vong and JoJo, praised Sarrazin's scouting abilities. Palmer, whom Sarrazin introduced to Brooklyn's River Café, said he was "a godfather to me."

"Marc was the first man I met when I came to the U.S.," Boulud said. "He advised all of us immigrants and never asked for favors. He worried about us like a father, and many of us, who didn't have anyone here, felt like he was our family. And he had a passion for all of us in the restaurant business, not only the successful ones but also the young people. He was constantly joking and playing, but he always worried about the future of these young people. And he was a humble man working this big network of cooks with just a pad of paper and a rubber band," Boulud said.

Sarrazin, Sr. joined the CIA's board in 1982 and had been a trustee emeritus since 1991. He also was on the advisory board of the Hospitality Management Department at New York City Technical College in Brooklyn and was Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Société Culinaire Philanthropique, an association for chefs, pastry chefs and butchers that administers a home for elderly chefs.

As many know, Marc had an untimely death. Many of the chefs whose lives and professions he fostered contributed to the making of this "Recipe Book." Chefs were each asked to comment on their relationship with Marc Sarrazin, Sr. and to create a menu they would share with him if they had the chance to "thank him" one more time. *Remembering Marc* is a heartfelt testament to a gentleman whose life impacted and improved that of so many others.