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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Les Dames d'Escoffier International Announces Its 2019  
Grande Dame Award Winner **NORA POUILLON**

Joins Lidia Bastianich, Joan Nathan and Alice Waters in Honor

LOUISVILLE, KY (October 3, 2019) – Les Dames d'Escoffier International's (LDEI) prestigious Grande Dame Award will be presented at this year's annual conference to Nora Pouillon, chef, restaurateur, award-winning author, and the first to open a Certified Organic restaurant in America. Pouillon is a 25-year member of LDEI's Washington DC Chapter and a pioneer in the organic farm-to-table movement.

LDEI is an organization of women leaders in the food, beverage and hospitality industries. Its Grande Dame Award honors a lifetime of outstanding professional achievement, excellence, and charitable/community contributions within the culinary industry and is bestowed annually. Pouillon, the fifteenth recipient of this international honor, will receive the award at a gala dinner during the LDEI conference in Nashville, Tennessee on Saturday, October 26, 2019.

Pouillon's culinary career spans well over 40 years culminating at the 2017 James Beard Awards ceremony where she accepted the esteemed James Beard Lifetime Achievement Award. Prior to that landmark accomplishment, she was named one of the "Most Powerful Women in Washington" by Washington Magazine and was the first recipient of the Genesis Award from Women Chef and Restaurateurs (WRC), which recognizes women who have achieved a true "first" in the culinary profession. The Chefs Collaborative of which she was a founding member, inducted her into their Pioneers Table.

In 1994 Pouillon wrote the cookbook; "Cooking with Nora – Healthful Seasonal Menus from Restaurant Nora", which was the finalist for the IACP Julia Child Cookbook Award; and in 2015 Knopf published her memoir, "My Organic Life: How a Pioneering Chef Changed the Way We Eat Today."

As early as the 1970's, Pouillon sought out farmers in the Virginia countryside organizing bus tours to introduce D.C. chefs to local farmers; jumpstarting the farm-to-table movement while helping to ensure the viability of their farms. She helped initiated D.C.'s first producer-only farmer's market, FRESHFARM

Markets, which now includes 14 markets in the metropolitan area. Longtime friend, Ann Yonkers, was co-executive director and ran the markets for 20 years.

Over the course of her career, Pouillon's culinary imprint has been extraordinary. As a chef, she educated both her patrons and community on the value of eating local, healthy and nutritious organic foods. She opened her first restaurant, The Tabard Inn, in 1976 where she introduced the farm-to-table concept. In 1979 she opened her namesake restaurant, Restaurant Nora with Steven and Thomas Damato. And in 1999 Restaurant Nora broke ground by becoming the nation's first Certified Organic restaurant. "It was no small task, indeed," Pouillon says, "In order to become certified, I had to prove that at least 95% of all foods came from certified organic sources."

Pouillon has taken the lead in a wide range of environmental causes including being one of the founders of Blue Circle Foods, a seafood company dedicated to protecting our ocean's ecosystems. Her core message, "health is wealth," resounds throughout her work, serving on the board of directors with organizations such as The Amazon Conservation Team (ACT), Earth Day Network (EDN), The Ocean Foundation (TOF), The Environmental Film Fest (EFF), and FRESHFARM Markets (FFM).

Her passion and lifelong support of organically grown food continues to resonate today as a result of her work by offering culinary experiences, mentoring, and education relating to organic living. "By staying true to my mission, even when people thought I was crazy, I influenced chefs and the public throughout the nation," Pouillon says, and we couldn't agree more.

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Les Dames d'Escoffier International (LDEI) is a worldwide philanthropic organization of professional women leaders in the fields of food, fine beverage and hospitality. The invitation-only membership, composed of over 2,400 women in 42 chapters across the US, Canada, France, the United Kingdom and Mexico, is highly diversified and reflects the multifaceted fields of contemporary gastronomy and hospitality. For more information, visit [www.ldei.org](http://www.ldei.org) 