



Klaus Ferdinand Diederich

JUL 18, 2023



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Klaus F. Diederich (October 5, 1938 - July 18, 2023) died at his home in Redwood City after a year-long battle with cancer. Schooled in the country of his birth, Germany, he worked in Zurich at the Carlton Elite Hotel, Restaurant Huegenin, and Zunfthaus Zimmerleuten before emigrating to the U.S. and settling in San Francisco in 1963. He was also chef garde-manger on the brand-new Holland-America Lines ship "Statendam" for its first two world tours.

The US Army promptly drafted him out of his first job in San Francisco at the Palace Hotel. He was sent to South Korea and assigned to the military police when his orders turned up missing - they had no idea he was a European-trained chef (and the army in Korea really didn't care). He found time there to pursue his interests in Asian art and culture that he retained all his life.

In 1964 he was in the army reserves at the San Francisco Presidio and working as banquet chef at the San Francisco Hilton. He inaugurated an innovative program there to train army chefs from the Presidio on weekends at the Hilton, which evolved into a culinary apprenticeship program, the first in San Francisco, still in place today.

He moved on to Hilton hotel administration, and then in 1971 Pan Am World Airways hired him as a station chef. Within a few months, he was directing a staff of 100 to produce millions of passenger meals annually, and pioneering key innovations in product development, specifications, purchasing, cost-control, labeling, food safety, regulatory compliance, staff training and evaluation, and labor relations. He loved Pan Am and considered that job the best he ever had. He also catered the Renaissance Faire in Marin County, where he fed many hungry artists and actors who worked at the Faire, as well as an enthusiastic public, for over 10 years. The "Toad in a Hole" that he created to sell there made it into an article on the front page of the Wall Street Journal.

In 1985 he opened his own business, Clipper Foods in Redwood City, where he manufactured frozen foods under USDA inspection for foodservice distribution and high-end retail sales, and



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scaled up bench-top formulations of new products for very large food companies. He sold Clipper Foods to retire in 2012.

He made good friends around the world whom he enjoyed all his life and he took great care of those relationships. He had a talent for teaching, efficient organization, and communication, and was indefatigable in pursuit of his interests (his children call him "the energizer bunny"). If you got him to sit still long enough, he could tell fascinating stories about the army, or Korea, or Pan Am, or USDA, and in passing he could describe the evolution of style and technique in antique European pewter, or how to train a bonsai tree.

He was the fourth generation in his family to own a food business. Although his was the fourth generation to travel to this country (great-grandfather settled in Ohio and became an American citizen in 1857, but returned to Germany; in 1896 his grandfather worked as a chef on Park Avenue, New York, but also returned to Germany; and his father flew seven transatlantic flights as chef de cuisine with Zeppelin), he was the first Diederich to remain in the United States for the rest of his life.

He leaves in bittersweet mourning his wife of 53 happy years, Marcia, their three amazing children, daughter Catherine, son Tony with wife Amanda, and son Marcus with wife Alicia, three adored grandchildren, Hannah, Matthew, and Calia, his nieces and nephew, Laura, Rose, Jennifer, and Rob, dear cousins and life-long friends in Germany, and many dear friends from the Gastronome Club of San Francisco, the Chefs Association of the Pacific Coast, Sei Boku Bonsai Kai of San Mateo, and Menlo School's class of 1991.



Tribute Wall

Klaus Ferdinand Diederich



Anonymous sent a Strength & Solace Spray to the Diederich family.

August 6 at 2:04 PM



Anonymous sent a Lavender Reflections Spray to the Diederich family.

August 6 at 1:54 PM



Anonymous planted a grove of 3 Memorial Trees in honor of Klaus.

July 26 at 9:19 AM





Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Klaus by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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