

## NEW AUXILIARY CHEFS PROGRAM WHETTING APPETITES IN 1SR



*AUXCHEF class*

Whenever you think of a chef, you are probably reminded of Ralph Kramden and Ed Norton's "Chef of the Future" TV commercial on the old Honeymooner's TV series. In the First District, Southern Region (D1-SR) the term "Chef of the Future" has taken on a new meaning.

Since September 11 and the Coast Guard's shift to the Department of Homeland Security, the Auxiliary's role is changing and evolving. In D1-SR, as a part of Coast Guard augmentation, a

number of Auxiliarists have come forward to now be trained as – of all things – chefs at various Coast Guard stations.

The program took hold in early 2002 under the auspices and support of then DSO-PS Dante Laurino. The man in the galley, appointed the first AuxChef Chairman, by Laurino, is responsible for program and training the Auxiliary chefs of the future, is Paul Richichi of Flotilla 12 in Amityville, NY.

In a strange way, a personal loss coupled coincidentally with the events of 9-11 brought Richichi into his role as the original Auxiliary Chef of the Future. The passing of Kathy, his wife of 32 years just days prior to September 11, 2001, left him with a deep loss.

In an effort to get him out of his self imposed house exile, Laurino and several members of Flotilla 12 asked Richichi to crew on a safety patrol in New York Harbor. Shortly after, Laurino set up a call from then Commanding Officer of USCG Station Fire Island (STAFI), CWO Kenneth Gibson. Mr. Gibson asked Paul if he could help out down at the station. Paul replied that he would be down that day.



When Paul arrived, he was met by Mr. *Day 1 Orientation*

Gibson. After some friendly banter while strolling by the galley, Mr. Gibson asked Paul if he had any special skills that could be put to use at the station. "Sure," Paul responded, "I can cook."

He was promptly put to work in the galley alongside a USCG regular and a reservist. During the next two weeks he reported to the station daily to assist with the preparation of meals.

He thereafter, with rare absences, became a fixture every Sunday morning. He helped to prepare breakfast and lunch for station personnel. This mission came natural to Paul, as he has always enjoyed cooking.



Paul thought about expanding this form of Auxiliary station augmentation by getting others involved. According to Paul, "We have Auxiliarists doing maintenance work, mowing the lawns, and manning watches, but no one in the galley." In his eyes, it would be a great morale booster for the regulars to have a home cooked meal with something different beyond the standard fare. "Especially when I do my Italian sauce for the guys, they go wild," Paul says with a satisfied smile.

*Graduates showing off credentials*

After preparing breakfast one morning for DC -P Dante Laurino and Commander John Felker, DIRAUX D1-SR, the Commander became a strong supporter of the "AUXCHEF" idea. DC-P Laurino working with VCO Nick Kerigan, and CDR Felker approved the program for D1SR. The Auxiliary "Chefs of the Future" program was born, the first of its kind in the Auxiliary.

The program's practical leadership and training is provided by none other than Auxiliarist Paul Richichi, who acts as the program's chairman. He is assisted by co-chairpersons Bobby Madison (Group Moriches), Mitchell Adler (Activities New York-South), and William Torgenson (Sector Long Island Sound and northern areas of Activities New York-North).

The first students were trained in early 2002 and were recognized at the March 2003 District Awards Conference. Several other classes followed throughout 2003 and 2004.

For his efforts in the program, Paul was awarded the USCG Commandant's Letter of Commendation. Mitch Adler received the USCG Auxiliary Achievement Medal for his fine culinary work at Activities New York. Mitch volunteered over 500 hours in augmenting the station's food services department.



*Mitch on Day 1*

This training is open to any Auxiliarist. The program has attracted members who just wish to expand their culinary capacities. When working in the galley, an Auxiliarist chef is under the direction of a CG cook. The reception to this program at local CG stations has been very positive and also has the backing of Commander John Healy, Commanding Officer, USCG Group Moriches.

Day one of "AUXCHEF" training consists of a verbal orientation by Auxiliarist's Richichi Laurino, Madison, recounting the history of the program, its goals, requirements and procedures. An "AUXCHEF" is required to work at least one meal shift plus one special event (example- a station barbecue) each year.

Galley protocol is a major part of the instruction. Among the many things covered in the instruction were to always carry a knife with the blade facing the deck. If it falls, the user is instructed not to attempt to catch it and to let it fall to the deck (rather disastrous consequences can occur if one attempts to catch a falling knife with a particularly sharp blade!). Other items covered include the wearing of plastic gloves and not entering the galley if you're suffering from a cold or any kind of viral infection.



*Mitch receiving award*

the students crack eggs and mix pancake batter.

Personal hygiene is repeatedly emphasized, with clean hands and re-washing a must. “AUXCHEFS” are allowed to report for galley duty wearing regular ODU’s and are not required to procure separate chef uniforms.

Once trained, the “AUXCHEFS” are eligible to work at their home stations as well as any other CG unit, including service on board USCG cutters. All “AUXCHEFS” are required to provide Paul with a monthly report outlining their respective activities, and to contact him if there are any difficulties in performing their tasks.

Day two of “AUXCHEF” training is the actual hands-on preparation of a breakfast. Auxiliarists Arnold Bein, Stephen Stolze, Carol Stolze, Nella Stanieri and Stephen Gillespie, from Station Eaton’s Neck in Northport, NY, were there to help the

Mr. Richichi took the students on a tour of the galley, and then gave them hands-on instruction in the preparation, safety, and serving of foods. The trainees were walked thru the meal-end process of cleaning and securing the galley, and making ready for the next meal.

When the training was completed there were six newly certified Auxiliary chefs in D1-SR ready to go off to duty wherever they are needed. The ranks of “AUXCHEF” have now swelled to over 50 members. Word of the program has spread not only in D1-SR, but throughout the USCG First District.

Paul recalls a request that he recently received from a cutter for an Auxiliary chef; no one was ready at that time to step in for that mission. “Now we have qualified personnel who have culinary degrees and multiple culinary degrees,” Paul says. “I never realized the amount of culinary talent that we have here in the Auxiliary.”

Some of this talent ranges from Auxiliarists who worked in their own restaurants to those who have attended the Culinary Institute. Some have worked as chefs on cruise lines. Interestingly, the “AUXCHEF” program has had a reverse



*Paul providing training*

effect of sorts, with some of the chefs moving on to become crew and coxswain qualified.

This program is about to take a turn towards the National side, according to Dante Laurino, who is now USCG Auxiliary Department Chief for Personnel (DC-P). He is aware that there are ad-hoc chef programs in other districts, but none with a formal training program and structure as is present in D1-SR. Who knows, next year's N-Train may be the first to include a training session for "AUXCHEFs."

Note: The program idea started at Station Fire Island during the TWA Flight 800 tragedy, when auxiliary members backfilled the station in support of the mission. The program guide, rules and regulations were in place by the end of 2001, after many reviews. DC-P Laurino, borrowing "Chef's of the Future" from the famous team of Ralph and Norton of the "Honeymooners" used that tag line to generate interest in the program. DC-P Laurino's AuxChef Guide was then approved for use. AuxChef's proudly serve in galleys and aboard USCG cutters in the Atlantic, Pacific, and the Caribbean.

After its successful start in First Southern, DC-P Laurino. rolled out the program to 5S, in support of the USCG Flag staff. It was an immediate success, with great support of the past 4 Commandants. NACO Nick Kerigan and NEXCOM approved AuxChef as a National Auxiliary Program in 2009.

Commodore Dante Laurino's New National AuxChef Guide was approved by the Director of FS, and Chief Director Mark Rizzo, in 2010, and is now included in the new Auxiliary Manual.

Article written by Arnold Bein , and updated by COMO Laurino.