

Trailblazing

The Party DoctoR_x & the Womens Food Alliance: 40 Years

Leigh Cort, Womens Food Alliance Founder, is celebrating the company's 12th anniversary and honoring her 40-year career in the hospitality industry! In 1985, she accepted her position as 'Party Director' at New York City's Trump Tower without knowing how to create galas for thousands of guests. Forty years later, she views the journey and ensuing years brilliantly punctuated with amazing people who came together to be her 'ensemble' of professional resources. Small parties created by the Party DoctoR_x became galas. Today her gift back to the hospitality industry is the Womens Food Alliance.

Where did it begin? Film producer/restaurateur Dino DeLaurentiis thought Leigh could handle the position at his new restaurant – the DDL BISTRO. It was nestled inside the iconic Fifth Avenue building at the base of the famed Trump Tower waterfall. Daily power lunches brought international celebrities to her table. Nightly, the space became the most popular paparazzi hangout of NYC! Guests shared sightings of foreign diplomats, business leaders, Hollywood moguls, Broadway celebrities, fashionistas and pop culture icons who partied with gusto.

On five floors of connected escalators, Leigh positioned long bars and talented staff, hiring sophisticated servers passing hors d'oeuvres to the guests who were honored to receive invitations. With gloved ladies hardly touching a morsel, champagne glasses clinked long into the wee hours of the morning. Leigh's first party of 1,500 guests honored famed sculptor – the Russian-born French artist celebrating his 90th birthday hosted by Hollywood heartthrobs.

Leigh's template for the Womens Food Alliance began that year when a few courageous women opened restaurants, bakeries, catering businesses, floral studios, staffing companies and more. They blazed trails, supported and encouraged each other. The Roundtable for Women in Foodservice was launched in NYC too, devoted to the advancement of women in all segments of the foodservice industry.

Similarly, today the Womens Food Alliance is a hospitality organization with members in related businesses that include hoteliers, chefs, farmers, event planners, cookbook authors, culinary leaders, and owners of distinctive event venues. Since inception, WFA has been connecting hard-working, creative women throughout northeast Florida and Coastal Georgia. It's an organization that is true to its mission to "...cultivate and advance education, collaboration, and networking for women in all fields of the hospitality industry. It's a haven for women to remember that it's also friendship first."

Through member word-of-mouth, the Alliance has grown from the original eight members to one hundred sixty, thriving with hard working entrepreneurs. Each month, the Womens Food Alliance plans distinctive programs that feature members and their venues, current successes – and challenges – with positivity as the centerpiece of networking.

In its 12th anniversary, the Womens Food Alliance continues to welcome new members and cherish the deep relationships that have been flourishing since 2013.

"We explore the bold world of hospitality together!"

