

Jet set caterer cooks gourmet dinner for 1,200

You say you want to feed a hot meal to 1,200 people in a building that's still under construction?

Ask Steve Poses.

You're entertaining at dinner on the stage of the Shubert Theater and there are no cooking facilities?

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You want an exciting gourmet menu served to 350 knowledgeable — and moneyed — diners in the ballroom of the Academy of Music?

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Everyone else does. Poses, owner of the long-established Frog restaurant (284 S. 14th St.) and its new offspring, The Commissary (1770 Walnut St.), has become an "overnight" sensation in

the catering business in the past year — and the darling of the Philadelphia social and jet-set types who plan benefits and balls.

By the way, Poses resolved those problems by serving crapes, from various locations, to 1,200 architects and friends in the unfinished Academy House last year. And he rented ovens and an 18-foot refrigerated truck that he turned into a chilly kitchen to prepare the theater dinner.

The truck worked so well, in fact, that he used it to handle a recent party at the Rare Mammal House at the Zoo, too.

And last night, at the Academy of Music, Poses and his entourage were

Caterer for jet set cooks gourmet dinners for 1,200



Staffing a chicken leg is kitchen surgery

CATERER, FROM L., has been adapted and adopted by a small army across the city. Frog was the first — and many think best — of the wave of storefront restaurants now an integral part of Philadelphia.

Poses' catering philosophy is simple: "Until we find out we can't do something, we'll assume that we can."

It's an advantage to being new at the job, he says. Somebody comes along with a set number of people, amount of money and time or place "and the whole world opens up for us."

"Catering really is just a question of being organized and having people willing to work very hard," Poses says, adding that the hardest part of catering is "just plain 'shlep-ping.'"

Like finding someone to bone 400 chicken drumsticks for the actresses at the RCA dinner. (That chore was

ultimately farmed out to a South Philadelphia butcher with some time to spare.)

Poses' attitude about cooking is equally easygoing.

"I've been very careful to try not to put myself in any one cuisine at Frog or Commissary. I always tried to reach across the borders of cuisines. For instance, at Frog we have two curry dishes using a standard bechamel sauce with Thai curry paste in it."

So it was natural for him to cross those same culinary borders in planning the cuisine menu for dinner for RCA. Feeling that there is basically a tremendous debt to oriental cooking in cuisine abroad, Poses accentuated the seasonal with the inclusion of a few Japanese hors d'oeuvres and the use of Chinese black mushrooms instead of parveils.

But why not just feast on the menu to get the idea.

Last night's hors d'oeuvres were

to include raw, fresh oysters; sushi (steamed rice wrapped with nori, a dried seaweed); sashimi (raw fish served with lemon and ginger); cornucopias of thin sliced raw salmon pickled with green peppercorns and dill; squid marinated with lemon and ginger, and baskets of fresh radishes served with oyster salt.

Definitely the spirit, if not the letter, of cuisine minceur.

"We really weren't sure 350 people of various backgrounds and interests would enjoy it if it was strictly cuisine minceur," Poses admits.

That's one reason the adapted "mayonnaise" of Gouard's new-style French cooking — made with chicken stock — was bypassed in favor of the real thing.

Other dishes, like the first course, Salsou, Aspoc with Lemon and Green Peppercorns, were virtually unchanged from Gouard's recipes.

The soup was to be served shimmering under glass domes at each place as the diners entered the ballroom for dinner. Eye appeal is a key element of cuisine minceur.

The entree, Chicken Stuffed with Sweetbreads, was Poses' own adaptation of a Gouard recipe. It was to be served with sorrel sauce and a pretty garnish of galiane vegetables — carrots, snow peas, celery root and Chinese mushrooms.

Breads and starches gave way to a salad of fresh herbs and greens with vinaigrette dressing.

"We settled on the menu very quickly — in like one meeting — except for the dessert," said Poses. The most likely choice of sorbet melted as quickly as the dessert would have waiting to reach 230 places.

What they decided on is, in Poses' words, "almost antithetical to cuisine minceur."

"We finally chose to come up with a visually beautiful dessert that people would like."

Since Regent's New York club also features luscious desserts, however, the choice was not out of context.

Dessert was to be a lush, heart-shaped Strawberry Tart en Sorbet.



Steve Poses here with a fair

Sorrel Sauce (recipe below)

SWEETBREAD STUFFING: Soak two ounces dried Chinese black mushrooms in warm water until tender. Drain coarsely.

Soak two tablespoons chopped shallots in two tablespoons butter. Add Chinese mushrooms and two ounces diced white mushrooms. Soak one minute. Add 1/2 pound

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