



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
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Chef Lydia Shire joins Middlesex Sheriff Peter J. Koutoujian to celebrate inmate graduation
Graduates completed culinary arts and custodial programs, earned high school equivalency

Billerica, Mass. - Famed Boston chef Lydia Shire addressed inmates and guests at the Middlesex Sheriff's Office culinary arts graduation ceremony Tuesday, March 10.

Shire, the chef and owner of Scampo at Boston's Liberty Hotel, participated at the invitation of Middlesex Sheriff Peter J. Koutoujian. The chef met with members of the 25th culinary arts graduating class before addressing graduates, family members and Middlesex Sheriff's Office personnel. In addition to 13 culinary arts students, the graduation recognized the efforts of nine inmates who completed the Sheriff's custodial certification program and six who earned their high school equivalency.

"I want to thank Lydia Shire for taking time to speak to our graduates," said Sheriff Koutoujian. "These graduation ceremonies are proud moments for these men and their families. To have someone of Chef Shire's renown take the time to not only show an interest in what they've accomplished, but to encourage them to strive for success in future endeavors means a tremendous amount."

"I saw this morning the quality of the culinary program the men are enrolled in," said Shire, who described the pastries and other foods she tested as, "wonderful and delicious."

Graduates of the 12-week culinary arts program earn a certificate of participation from Shawsheen Regional Technical High School and credits towards a degree at Middlesex Community College. In addition, they earn a SERVSAFE sanitation certificate.

Inmates who participate in the nine week custodial program learn about the newest techniques and tools in the green janitorial industry and graduate with multiple private certifications they can then use to apply for jobs following their release.

“These programs provide inmates the opportunity to gain valuable job skills in growing fields,” said Sheriff Koutoujian. “Participation in these programs, and others like them, has been shown to reduce recidivism and that is our goal – to return inmates back to the community, more prepared to be responsible and productive citizens.”

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Photo captions:

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Middlesex Sheriff Peter J. Koutoujian and chef Lydia Shire in the culinary arts kitchen prior to Tuesday’s graduation ceremony at the Middlesex House of Correction in Billerica.

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Middlesex Sheriff Peter J. Koutoujian (from left) and chef Lydia Shire with Middlesex House of Correction Culinary Arts instructors Captain Robert Moschella and chef William Bourgeois prior to Tuesday’s graduation ceremony in Billerica.