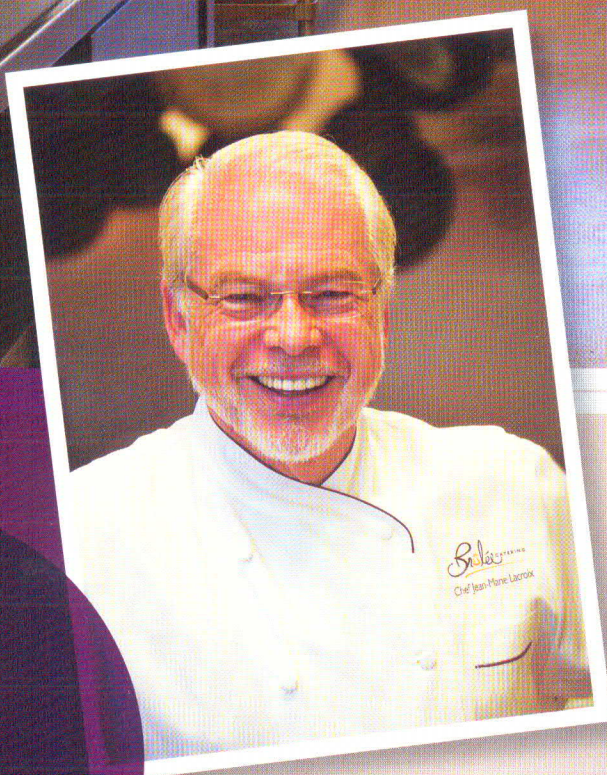




*At Philadelphia's Please Touch Museum, Chef Lacroix and his team designed an efficient kitchen while working within the physical limitations of a 135-year-old building.*



## CHEF JEAN-MARIE LACROIX

Brûlée Catering,  
Philadelphia

As an acclaimed caterer and foodservice provider at a number of exclusive venues in Philadelphia, Brûlée Catering by Chef Jean-Marie Lacroix operates out of four kitchens in the city. It was only involved in the design of one, however—the Please Touch Museum at Memorial Hall, a children's museum located inside a National Historic Landmark building. Brûlée has operated the catering kitchen as well as the museum café since its grand opening in 2008.

"We were involved in the early design process, but limited to the remaining space, based on the needs for the actual museum space first," says Chef-Partner Jean-Marie Lacroix, a James Beard award-winner. "Considering its limitations, we have designed what we think is a highly efficient space for production and turn-out."

The facilities at the museum include a 1,085-square-foot main production kitchen, and a 1,351-square-foot prep kitchen with a walk-in cooler and freezer on the lower level. From these spaces, the kitchen serves events with an average size of 200 guests, although it's handled events for up to 2,000.





"One of the challenges in designing the kitchen was working within the physical limitations of a 135-year-old building," explains Lacroix. "Therefore, we had to design around three large support columns that essentially split the kitchen in half. The east half of the kitchen runs about 35 feet long by 21 feet wide, and consists of a small walk-in (80 square feet), prep sinks, several moveable prep tables and a small pot sink area. The west half runs about 25 feet long by 14 feet wide, with the exhaust hood and hot equipment running along the long wall, and the remaining area split up with low reach-in coolers and additional countertop prep space.

"We also tried to make the space flexible by having extra electrical outlets, and all of our prep tables and cooler storage on wheels," says Lacroix. "This allows us to reconfigure the space to accommodate the additional staff and product needed for larger events."

Major pieces of equipment in the kitchen include a Vulcan 30-gallon tilt skillet; two Vulcan six-burner ranges with conventional ovens; a Vulcan double-door stack oven; a Cook Shack Smoker; a Vulcan steamer; two True reach-in refrigerators; and two True

reach-in freezers. Key pieces of smaller equipment include a Hobart 2-quart mixer, a Waring commercial blender and immersion blender, a Robot Coupe food processor and a Kitchen Aid mixer.

Lacroix considers the gas stove, with convection and slow-cooking features, to be the most important piece of equipment in the kitchen. And he believes that where the equipment is placed is a key to success.

"The most important factor in a catering kitchen is the placement of all the heavy equipment, like stoves, steam convection ovens, walk-in refrigeration, table refrigeration, sinks, pot racks and pot wash," he says. "Each should be placed within a few walking steps. Efficiency is the key for chefs. Believe it or not, too much space can actually be a problem.

"A well-designed and well-equipped kitchen is also critical to being able to get food out at the right temperature at the right time," Lacroix continues. "At Please Touch Museum, the flexibility to move or add equipment, tables and holding space allows us to adjust to serve parties of all sizes efficiently."