

# All the smells without the mess

By SHARON MCCULLY

**C**hef Caroline McCann has nibbled cheese and sipped fine wines in a castle in France, served diplomats at Quebec House in New York City and entertained audiences on the popular TV cooking show *Cook Like a Chef*.

But it's not all glamour, she's quick to point out.

"I gained 20 pounds gourmand testing in France, she chuckled, "and although I spent six weeks in a castle in the Loire Valley training to be a chef, it was hard and exhausting work."

McCann's work as a chef begins far away from the sparkling stainless steel kitchen where she emerges with the final product.

"I'm a farmer," she states proudly. "I had a farm in the Niagara Region where I grew my own peaches, cher-

ries and apples and sold them at a farmer's market, along with recipes and information about farm products."

It was there McCann began her private catering business, transforming local products into delectable dishes for dinner parties for busy executives or those who just enjoyed a great meal in their own home without the fuss and mess.

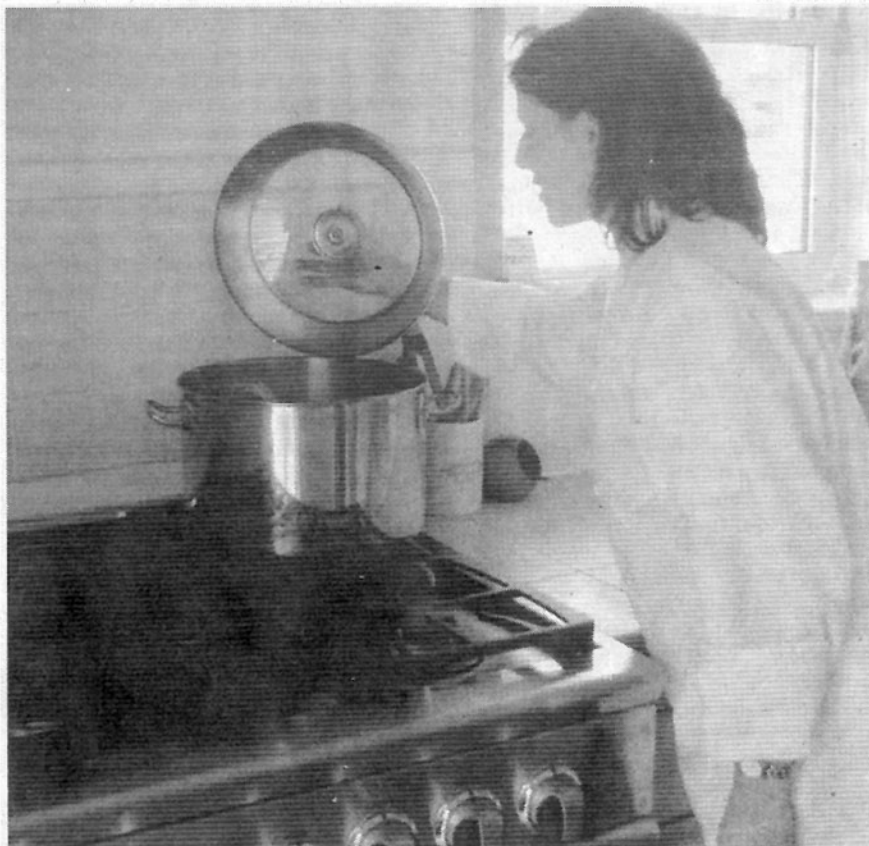
The young chef has returned to her native Quebec after a two-year stint as executive chef at Quebec House in New York from 1999-2001, 20 episodes as guest chef on the food network, and several years of farming, restaurant cooking and managing her own catering business in the Niagara Peninsula.

Originally from Verdun, McCann said she chose to launch her new catering business Chefadom in the 'magnificent region of Magog' because of its abundance of local products which form the basis of every dish.

"I bought a house in Magog in February, and my first task was to meet with local producers," she said. "I found a woman in Stanstead who grows her own vegetables and met a number of producers of local meats - rabbit, lamb, beef."

"It is very important for me to use fresh, locally-grown products," she insists. "If I can't find it in the Eastern Townships, then I go to Quebec-based products, then Canadian."

McCann's new Chefadom service in Magog offers home catering for cocktail parties, dinner parties



*Chef Caroline McCann has returned to Quebec to start a catering business in Magog.*

or barbecues at a price comparable or less than a night out at a fine restaurant.

"People need time to relax and enjoy a meal with friends and family," McCann said. "What we do is arrive in their kitchen with the basis of the meal, along with our own pots and pans and cooking supplies and prepare the rest of it there. The meal is served either on their own dishes or we arrange for dish rentals, deliver and return them. If we use dishes from home, we wash them and put them away," she adds. "When we leave, it's as though we were never there - we even put out the garbage."

McCann generally works alone in the kitchen with a server. "Clients get

to enjoy the home-cooked smells without the work," she says. Even special diets are accommodated.

"Our approach is to be professional, but very casual," McCann said. "I love to cook and I like to offer a bit more than the usual fare. If I'm doing burgers on the barbecue, I might suggest lamb burgers with grilled vegetable kabobs instead of the usual beef."

She also encourages prospective customers to begin by establishing a budget, then discussing menu choices with her. "Once that is established, I want people to be able to relax and enjoy occasion - spend that extra time getting prettied up instead of working in the kitchen."