

Report for Congress in Chile.

Secretary General of the World Association of Chefs Societies
Helgi Einarsson

Report:

Dear fellow members of WACS,

It has been a great honour to have the opportunity to work within the board of WACS, with Chefs from all around the world and to have the possibility to visit many of our member countries while attending board meetings.

Since we were elected for the WACS Presidium at the last Congress in Dubai, in 2008, there have been many things to learn and to understand; differences in culture between countries, seeing the wide range of cuisine, differences in educational methods and similarities and differences in goals that we have set for our students that will be the future of WACS. WACS is a growing association, we have close to one hundred member countries which are a good show of a wide range of cuisines and cooking methods within our association.

Also since the last congress, the world economy has gone through a lot of changes. Iceland has had its toll of it and we have gone through many difficult stages. In the years since 2000, when everything was growing at top speed almost all over the world, there had been an increase in opening new restaurants and growth in many countries in the food industry as well as huge growth in tourism.

In the year 2009 we have faced difficulties that we have never faced before. Restaurants closing down as never before, changes in diets and demand for and cost of food products has changed very much. High prices and best quality food products are not as popular as before and people in every country are going more for local food products rather than imported products.

My belief and hope is that, in the year 2010, we will see changes for the better of our Chefs and also for the restaurant and tourism industry. What we are seeing now are that local people travel much more within their home countries and do not travel as far as they used to for vacation to other countries. any restaurant owners say they are relying much more on locals than before and this can also be a very positive thing because, although local people are the toughest customers, they also come again and again if we can meet their expectations with our cooking skills and good service. This will help us to do our work better than ever before.

In Iceland, the year 2009 was our best year in tourism as local people spent money within Iceland. Today we have a very positive growth in the restaurant industry around the country, not only in towns and cities but also in the countryside and all around Iceland. We are learning to appreciate the things around us that were maybe too close to be valued. I think that many of you have similar stories about your

home market. I believe that the market is coming back but as a very different market with the toughest judges that we can have.

We the chefs around the world are so lucky that our experience is recognized in other countries so that the world is our market. We are not tied only to our home markets. We can travel around or move to other countries and begin working within the food industry and learn as we go. One of the main goals of this WACS board, to bring this to a higher level, is to assist culinary schools and our member countries to have a certain standard with regards to education so that our members can be recognized and approved to work in as many countries as possible. We have a long way to go but our goals are reachable. It all depends on how much good work we can do and how active we can get our members active within individual associations in assisting us to reach those goals.

This Board has done a lot in the last 20 months. We officially opened our new office in Paris and our new Office manager Mr. Ragnar Fridriksson has done a very good job. We have high expectations for our office but it has been working very well beyond that with Ragnar.

We have also launched a new website in four languages including an online store, making it easier for our members to buy WACS products. Also we are launching our new World Chefs Magazine, here at the Congress.

We had the pleasure to have in Iceland the WACS Education Committee for their three day meeting and it looks like they had a good meeting. It was a pleasure to show them a little of what we have in Iceland and as you can see in the World Chefs magazine, Chef Sara Harrel from Canada wrote an article about her visit to Iceland.

Finally, we have visited many of our member countries for board meetings and there is a lot of very good work being done by the board for WACS. I want to encourage our members to work with us and be more active for our association. It is always a great pleasure working with all the chefs around the world.

Thank you,
Helgi Einarsson
Secretary General