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## Artist weds chef in delicious 5-day celebration

By JUDIE DWECK

Fairy tale weddings are the stuff of dreams. Every now and then, the dream comes true.

Start with Nicole Bartelme, a prominent New York artist, who grew up in Scarsdale. Add world famous chef David Bouley of Manhattan's Bouley and Danube fame. Bring these two artists together for a five-star celebration at Chateau de la Bourdaisière in France, complete with haute cuisine prepared by well known chefs, haute couture from Valentino and Christian LaCroix, and friends and family from around the world, and the fairy tale becomes reality. A staff of more than 20, a chef from Barcelona, master bread and cheese makers, vintners and organic, natural foods were all part of Bouley and Bartelme's wedding vision.

The theme of the union of these two kindred spirits was the dragonfly, a Japanese symbol of fortitude and strength, an ability to move forward, accept change, remember people from the past, and celebrate new friends. Handmade dragonfly-embossed paper encased the menus and delicate multicolored ornaments decorated the wedding table.

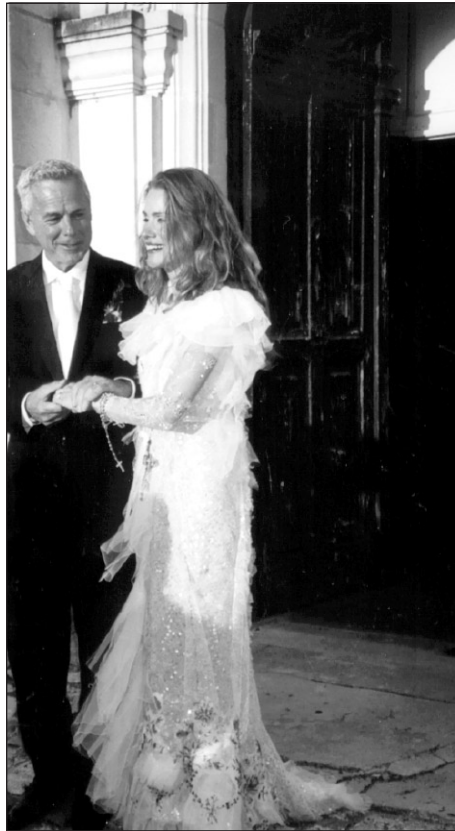
Margaret Bartelme, mother of the bride, used her skills as an artist to describe the wedding in such detail, I almost felt I'd been there.

The celebration in Mont Louis Sur Loire lasted for five days with activities planned for the guests both day and evening, she said. Guests arriving at Chateau Bourdaisière were greeted by a storyteller lecturing on the fine points of absinthe, then a sampling of wines, cheese and breads prepared by master baker Jacques Mahou, a seventh-generation baker. This took place in a tent pitched next to Chateau Bourdaisière, one of the two chateaux taken over for the wedding and a prelude to the organic and haute cuisine meals to follow.

One of the Scarsdale residents who attended this fete, Betty Pforzheimer, called it "an extraordinary and very happy experience." She said, "Despite the ornate backdrop, there was a warm family feeling throughout. David Bouley was orchestrating everything, but managed to be welcoming. It was nice to reconnect with the young Scarsdale people who attended and see the exceptional adults they have become."

Lester Crystal, producer of the Jim Lehrer NewsHour described the wedding as "a unique and joyous celebration of exquisite flavors and a very special relationship presided over by David and Nicki." Margaret Bartelme said, "Nicole and David's dynamic bonding in the Loire River Valley was powerful enough to permanently enhance the lives of everyone participating in the five-day fete."

Nicole was my neighbor in Fox Meadow and



TOBY CRYSTAL PHOTO

David Bouley and Nicole Bartelme

a participant in my creative cooking classes for elementary school children. I should have known that her agile hands that prepared "coconut chicken" and "meatballs and noodles" would find their way into both the art world, by career, and the culinary world, through marriage. A graduate of Rhode Island School of Design, she is now an accomplished artist often working with oils on copper with her works exhibited in SoHo, Tribeca and Rhode Island galleries. She originated the concept and structure for the Tribeca Film Festival while working with Partnership for the Homeless. After the death of her father Joe Bartelme, NBC TV producer for "The Today Show," Nicole started researching healthy foods and lifestyles, sparking an interest in organic and natural foods. She met Bouley when she was a fundraiser for Partnership for the Homeless. After 9/11, they reconnected and the rest is history.

Margaret Bartelme's toast sums up this wonderful union: "There are many ways of describing people in the arts, national treasures, and chevaliers. Here we have two spirits with great vision, creativity and a sense of adventure.

If they were in charge of the planet, the world would be filled with great beauty and good health."

Tours of the gardens of several chateaux, including the famous Villandry gardens — herbal, medicinal, water and ornamental — were followed by a Japanese lunch prepared by celebrated chefs Tadao Mikai and Shimichi. The meal included tofu with dashi truffle sauce, braised duck with fried eggplant, and several kinds of Kyoto sashimi.

Imagine a chateau's moat, dry, stone-lined and filled with aromatic plants, lit by hundreds of candles and torches and a very long table strewn with fresh flowers and you have the setting for yet another glorious meal. The meat was from pigs fed an acorns-only diet, and was very low in saturated fat and healthy — proof that fine dining can be healthy, one of Chef Bouley's tenets. Another dinner, bistro style, included leg of veal and lamb on the barbecue, and blood sausage and cured meats, with entertainment by a French country band.

All this led to Thursday's civil wedding ceremony in Tours and a religious ceremony at L'Eglise Saint Laurent. The bride looked regal in an elegant and simple Valentino gown at the religious ceremony. Food seemed to peek out at every event. The Trappist monk Père David, who married the pair, sells health foods prepared at his monastery, and the deputy mayor at the civil ceremony owns a restaurant.

Then it was back to the chateau for hors d'oeuvres. In the dining room every guest was given a very long-stemmed white rose to form an arbor for the bride and groom to enter.

The wedding dinner was prepared by Chef Cesar Ramirez and pastry chef Alex Grunert. Among the courses were tomato gazpacho with crab, tomato sorbet and tomato cloud, all prepared with some of the 500 varieties of heirloom tomatoes from the gardens, Brittany lobster with turbot, roasted rack of lamb and Valrhona chocolate soufflé with coconut ice cream and chocolate sorbet. Add operatic arias, fireworks, performers on stilts with the illuminated chateau as the background and, of course, a fresh flower-topped wedding cake and the picture is complete.

Friday included a visit to the Caves de Vin Champigny and a family-style dinner in a cave where picnic tables were set up, and an open fire built. The groom grilled chicken on the spit, and just-picked tomatoes, whipped potatoes with Normandy butter, fruits and cheeses were served. Margaret called it "a wonderful bonding with everyone singing and then cleaning up."

The wedding of Nicole Bartelme and David Bouley was like a fairy tale, and will long linger in their guests' memory.