

La Maison Française (LMF)
Report to the Housing Strategy Group
January 29, 2008

About LMF

Nous sommes La Maison Française (LMF), une bande d'étudiants à MIT qui s'intéresse à parler la langue française et découvrir la culture française. In other words, we are a group of students who like to speak French and explore French culture. Every LMF member makes an educational and social commitment to the house. We learn together, we cook together, and we do household chores together. Mostly, though, we figure out how to navigate the behemoth that is MIT.

Events and initiatives

Dining

- Our community dining program is as active as ever. Every day except Saturday, a cooking team of about four students prepares dinner for the house. Every member “chefs,” or chooses the recipes, about once per month.
- Only two students are excused from cooking. These are the *Ministre des Aliments* (Food Steward), who orders food for menus, and the Treasurer.
- Our meals are delicious and cheap (average price is under \$4 per person).
- Contrary to popular belief, we do *not* only cook French food! LMF members are a diverse bunch; sometimes we cook the comfort foods of our homes, and sometimes we branch out into unexplored culinary territory.
- We use only non-disposable kitchenware and recycle avidly, keeping our environmental footprint small.
- We regularly invite guests, including many MIT students, professors, and administrators (both French-speaking and French-challenged) to join us for meals and lively discussions. Just ask Dean Benedict!

Community Events

- Annual September Picnic (September 3, 2007): We make a delicious picnic and plop ourselves down in Killian Court, using the abstract art as furniture. This is the “get to know our awesome new freshmen” event.
- Annual Cabin Trip (October 19-21, 2007): We take over Camelot Cabin in New Hampshire for three days. We cook (does anyone see a pattern here?), hike, roast marshmallows over a campfire, tell ghost stories, play games, and if there’s time, sleep a little.
- Annual Christmas Diner (December 1, 2007): We decorate a lounge in New House, cook, dress up, invite alums and friends from all across campus, and have a grand old time!
- Spring Semiformal (May 11, 2007): We don our top hats and gowns and head out into Boston or Cambridge for a good dinner (possibly the only time we *don’t* make the meal ourselves) and lots of fun.
- Senior Brunch (May 13, 2007): A bittersweet time is had by all as we shower our departing seniors with lavish desserts and embarrassing toasts.

Cultural Activities and Education (many organized by our Ministre de l'Éducation)

- We speak French every night at dinner, all day on Wednesdays, twice per semester during our French Marathon, and of course whenever else we want!
- Many LMF members take French classes, pursue a French minor, travel to France, or work in France (more on this later). We maintain close ties with the French Language Department and MISTI-France, and spread word (around the campus as well as within French House) of various related experiences and opportunities.
- A French film is screened every Saturday night as part of our Cinémaison program.
- Every so often, we have a “labeling party,” in which we label everything (and we mean *everything*) in the house in French.
- We have a French word of the day.
- Tower of Babel

International Experiences

- More than one third of LMF members have studied or interned abroad in the past two years (this only counts stays of two months or more).
- Members of LMF (two this IAP) are routinely selected to travel to France for the January Scholars in France program through the French Department.
- We have hosted a (French-speaking) Cambridge exchange student and sent three students to Cambridge in the last three years.
- We have hosted a group of Concert Choir members from Switzerland, and LMF members in Concert Choir went to Switzerland.
- The new company QTRAX chose four MIT students to send to France as part of their launch festivities. Three of the four students are LMF members.

Institutional Memory

- The LMF Wiki, created in February 2006, continues to be the easiest and most effective way to manage information about LMF.
- We store everything from recipes to meeting minutes to templates of events (i.e. our annual Christmas Dinner) on the Wiki.

Challenges

In May 2008, twelve LMF members will graduate, leaving the house almost half empty. In order to avoid recruiting 100% freshmen (and therefore perpetuating an unbalanced class distribution within the house), we are currently undertaking an IAP Rush to attract current MIT students to live in LMF. This project has been generously funded by Sandra and Wes Harris (thank you!).