

# industry profile

## Richard J.S. Gutman

Director and curator, Culinary Arts Museum at Johnson & Wales University, Providence, Rhode Island



**Years at this position:** 10

**Education:** Bachelor's degree, architecture, Cornell University, 1972.

**How you got the gig:** In 1989, the university was

given the Ever Ready, a 1926 15-stool diner. When it was moved inside the museum in 2002, I was hired to be a guest curator for the exhibit, and I loaned 250 objects from my house for the display. It was well-received, and, several years later, I was named director and curator.

**What is the Culinary Arts Museum at Johnson & Wales University?** It is a teaching museum that preserves and interprets culinary and hospitality heritage. A major focus of the university is to encourage academic success and public enjoyment. We showcase the work of students, alumni and faculty.

**What else are you known for?** I am considered the leading expert on the subject of diners. I have written four books on their history and consulted on more than 85 restoration projects and new installations. In a front-page profile in *The Wall Street Journal*, it was written, "Next time you step into a diner, thank Richard J.S. Gutman for the experience."

**What was your first job?** I was a partner at Poor Willie Productions, a Boston design and media firm. I produced a slide show, "Adam and Eve on a Raft," about food production in diners for "Objects for Preparing Food," an exhibition jointly organized by the Museum of Contemporary Crafts, New York, and the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian, Washington, D.C.

**How did you know that you wanted a career in food history?** I looked into the history of diners and discovered it had never been written. Sorting it out, and eating many meals along the way, I became fascinated by this slice of the foodservice industry that produced so many amazing structures and fed countless people over the decades.

**What is your advice to culinary students who do not want a traditional culinary career?** The world of food and foodservice is so vast that there is room for all sorts of entrepreneurs.

**What is the most rewarding part of your job?** Interacting with visitors at the museum is something I look forward to every day. Just like each object on display, every person has a story to tell and I am fascinated and invigorated by learning about them.

**What's your favorite meal?** Two poached eggs on toast also known as, Adam and Eve on a raft.



To learn more about the Culinary Museum at Johnson & Wales University, visit [www.culinary.org](http://www.culinary.org).

**top:** Rhode Island Food Policy Council meeting attendees enjoy dessert from the Agora Ice Cream Parlor on display in the museum, December 2014.

**bottom:** Adam and Eve on a raft.