



Les Dames d'Escoffier
INTERNATIONAL



Founded in 2013

Ideibirmingham.org

Spring 2025

President's Note

The BIGGEST news is about an in-person chapter-wide meeting in March. This is the best time ever to be a Dame! Our chapter is vibrant and making a positive impact in our city.

Considering all that we do, we must meet as a group more than once a year!! The meeting will take place on Sunday, March 16th at IZ The Place, 3325 Rocky Ridge Plaza, Suite 100, Vestavia, AL 35243 from 2 to 4 p.m. On behalf of your board, I strongly encourage all members to attend this meeting as it involves important issues for our chapter, including fundraising, member expectations, new-member drive, scholarships, grants, and more.

Your executive board has been very hard at work and is eager to share their reports. Think of this meeting as "housekeeping" plus strategic planning for our future. There will be time for breakout sessions and surveys, so please attend. You are very important to our chapter!

Speaking of all we do; our chapter had a jam-packed January with four micro-events planned by VP of Programs Lindsey Noto-King. The micro-events began with a happy hour at Sloan's, and the following Saturday, Dance Trance with Dame Erin Mooney at the Homewood

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Sweeter Than Ever

Sweet Treats 2025 was the most successful year yet!



A team of Dame bakers and volunteers helped make this year's Sweet Treats fundraiser the best one to date. See page 2 for the full story and details on just how much was raised.



Sweet Treats Exceeds Goal and Expands Reach

by Susan Swagler

What started as a simple bake sale has, under the direction and vision of Dame Gia McCollister, grown into our second-largest fundraiser—making enough money to fund an entire entrepreneurial grant and more.

This year, Sweet Treats raised \$9,146.30. We raised \$7,951 with our online pre-sales and another \$1,195.30 at Pepper Place Market.

Just as importantly, Sweet Treats 2025 has grown in every way—more boxes, more bakers, more volunteers, and more fans.

Gia says, “Even though we make money with this small fundraiser, the main goal is ‘community outreach and branding.’ I see an increase in followers in our social media only when we are promoting our Champagne & Fried Chicken and our Sweet Treats. They are our best tools to let people know who we are.”

The Sweet Treats committee, with Gia as chair and Susan Swagler working closely with her on the business side, produced 160 beautiful boxes with some 15 bags of assorted homemade goodies in each.

There were almond cookies, vanilla wafers, sugar cookies, ginger cookies, and Snickerdoodles. We shared our diversity and family recipes of Greek koulourakia and Galleta Mexicana and French sables and Italian wedding cookies. Becky Satterfield made buttery heart-shaped cookies with vanilla bean paste and citrusy Fiori di Sicilia. She also contributed a few of her shortbread hand-pressed with intricate antique heart molds. Idie Hastings made her own Italian biscotti. New member Katie Cor-



Volunteers at Hot & Hot packed 160 large boxes filled with an assortment of baked goods from our members as well as a couple dozen smaller boxes that were available for on-site donations at the Market.

nutt brought mini versions of her locally famous cinnamon rolls. And Takeeka Goshay brought perfect slices of cake in lovely gold boxes. Pam Lolley made the rosemary-lavender shortbread we all know and love; Emily Nabors Hall made her famous Breakup Cookie into blondies; and Tanesha Sims-Summers brought her popular artisanal kettle corn.

In addition to the 160 large boxes of sweets, we had a couple dozen smaller boxes of Sweet Treats as well as individual heart-shaped cakes from Dames Tina Liollo and Agatha Pihakis and delicious rose geranium jam from Dames Deborah

Stone and Alex Stone Flowers to sell at Pepper Place Market.

As we did last year, our chapter organized pre-sales of the boxes using our Give Lively ticketing platform (for approved nonprofits with no administration fees for us) with links from our chapter website and on all our social media platforms.

Boxes were available for pre-sale pick up at Pepper Place Winter Market on Saturday, February 8, just in time for Valentine’s Day gifting and Super Bowl parties.

Gia says she was “happy to see an increase in participation from our Dames.”

Having plenty of items to sell at

the market on pick-up day this time made Dames and our customers happy and put us well over our initial goal of \$8,000.

It’s true that this year’s event saw more participation than ever before, with 30 Dames baking their best cookies, brownies, bars, and more and 27 volunteers (working box assembly and package pick-up and day-of sales at the Market).

Some 15 Dames, like Takeeka Goshay and Emily Tuttle-Shell did double duty—baking and working. And so many Dames bought and sold boxes, too. Idie opened up Hot and Hot Fish Club for assembly, and Jennifer Yarbrough brought Crestline Bagels and coffee.

At the end of the event, we had a few items left over, and Dame Chanda Temple took those sweets to Pathways women’s and children’s shelter and to the City of Birmingham’s 911 operators. So, we made even more people happy!

Dame Lynne Ryan, who is a dual member here and in New York, bought two boxes and donated them back to the chapter. We used them for a giveaway on Instagram and gained some new followers as a result.

Also new this year, we relied upon AI to get the job done. Gia utilized Canva, ChatGPT, Slack, and regular email to organize her team and schedule social media posts.

Dame Audrey Pannell arranged for television spots on both Fox 6 and CBS 42 news programs with Dames Lindsey Noto-King and Jasmine Smith stepping up.

And Gia made sure that our baking Dames were spotlighted on social media with a series of Instagram posts introducing each one. These posts were some of the most popular we’ve seen in a while. They grew our name recognition and

certainly helped us reach our goal.

While this year saw more boxes—and profit—than ever before, the main reason behind Sweet Treats is community outreach while branding our own Dames’ businesses, Gia says. We nailed that! But we always get better every year.

Figure out now, how you can participate next time. There’s room to grow that part of this sweet event. Gia says this kind of teamwork—from our desks to our kitchens to feet on the ground—shows just how much we can accomplish when we work together toward shared goals.

.....Events Calendar.....

Saturday, March 1	Feast for Hope Gala Join us and serve as a hostess at the event. Wear something in Dames blue.	Community Food Bank of Central Alabama, 6-10 p.m. Dames arrive at 5:45
Wednesday, March 5	Network with Dames	Cafe IZ, 5-6 p.m.
Sunday, March 16,	Mandatory Chapter Meeting	IZ The Place 3325 Rocky Ridge Plaza, Suite 100, Vestavia, AL 35243. 2-4 p.m.
Wednesday, March 19	Community Food Bank Volunteer Day	Food Bank Warehouse, 1-3 p.m.
Monday, March 24	LDEI Live Online, Mediterranean Meal Planning: Advice to Boost Your Health and Save Your Sanity. Featuring Dames Sonthe Burge RDN and Andrea Kirkland, RDN	LDEI Live Online webinar 11 a.m.-noon CST Free for Dames, pre-register at members.ldei.org
April event: Date and details coming soon	Tacos and Tequila, hosted by Dames Dulce Rivera and Aimee Castro	We will be learning to make fresh tortillas from scratch. Tequila tasting + education
Friday, April 4 to Sunday, April 6	MFK Symposium	Nashville, Tennessee
Sunday, October 19	Champagne & Fried Chicken	The Market at Pepper Place

Stronger Together: The 4th Annual Feast for Hope Gala with the Food Bank

by Susan Swagler

Our ongoing partnership with the Community Food Bank of Central Alabama is the perfect example of women working together to get things done.

For years, Dames have worked as volunteers at the Food Bank each month, packing boxes of food to feed thousands of families. And for the past few years, we have helped Food Bank CEO Nicole Williams and Ginger Pegues, Director of Development, with their Feast for Hope gala, which raises money to allow them to continue their increasingly important work.

The fourth annual Feast for Hope gala is Saturday, March 1, at the Food Bank warehouse. It's a five-course meal with specially selected wine pairings. Funds raised are a direct investment into food assistance programs, providing meals for the one in six people facing hunger across our communities.

The Feast for Hope gala is not just a delicious and beautiful fundraiser, it's also an example of female partnerships in the truest sense.

Our catering Dames provide the feast at cost; they arrange for servers, too. This year, the Food Bank will be working with new Dame Chae Richards at EventWorks to help transform the warehouse into a gala space. And volunteer Dames show up at the event to welcome guests, pour wines, and share our mission.

Each year, the Food Bank produces a video, with the help of Dame Andrea Kirkland and Dame Brooke Bell at Hoffman Media, to showcase



The warehouse at the Community Food Bank of Central Alabama is transformed each year for the Feast for Hope gala. Dame Chae Richards will be helping with that effort this year.

our members and their culinary contributions that night as well as our ongoing volunteer work. From the very first Feast for Hope gala, the Food Bank has supported our philanthropy with a donation to our scholarship fund. Their gift is always directed to a scholarship recipient who is working to address food insecurity in her own community.

Dame Kay Bruno Reed, who is heading up the menu planning, says: "Once again we have an exciting menu for the Feast for Hope gala. The shrimp and lobster salad was such a hit last year that I am going to prepare it again this year. Dames Maureen Holt and Stefanie Maloney are going to prepare a beautiful salad and Tre Luna (Dames Erin Mooney and Sara

Walker) will serve short ribs again this year but with fingerling potatoes and a Bomba sauce. The cheese course presented by Dame Lindsey Noto-King, owner of Feast Birmingham, is not only a beautiful presentation but incredibly delicious. As always, our talented pastry Dames will take care of the dessert course with an assortment of yummy treats."

Dame Agatha Pihakis has organized these baking Dames. She has asked Fanoula Gulas (The Greek Kouzina) to make her baklava, Tina Liollo (Tina's Market) will make cinnamon roll bars, and Kristal Bryant (K&J's Elegant Pastries), Rita Bernhardt (Luca), Takeeka Goshay (Adored Sweets), and Telia Johnson (Telia Johnson

Cakes) also will be baking sweets for the event.

Here's the gala menu:

- Shrimp and Lobster Salad (in a tin) by Dame Kay Bruno Reed of IZ Weddings & Events
- Beet and Radish Carpaccio with Winter Greens, Shaved Parmesan, Toasted Pumpkins Seeds, and Lemon Vinaigrette by Dame Maureen Holt of Southern Graze and Dame Stefanie Maloney of Scrumptious
- Boneless Short Ribs and Herb-Roasted Fingerling Potatoes with Bomba Sauce by Dame Erin Mooney and Dame Sara Walker of Tre Luna Catering (Vegetarian option: Roasted Vegetable Pasta)
- Brulee Brie Wheel for Two with Rosemary Crackers and Blueberry-Walnut Chutney by Dame Lindsey Noto-King of Feast Birmingham
- Assorted desserts by Dames Fanoula Gulas (The Greek Kouzina) to make her baklava, Tina Liollo (Tina's Market) will make cinnamon roll bars, and Kristal Bryant (K&J's Elegant Pastries), Rita Bernhardt (Luca), Takeeka Goshay (Adored Sweets), and Telia Johnson (Telia Johnson Cakes)

The Food Bank serves 12 counties in central Alabama, feeding people today and fostering collaboration, such as the one with us, to end hunger tomorrow. Currently the Food Bank feeds over 145,000 people at risk of hunger each month.

For more information about the Food Bank: <https://feedingal.org/>

For more information about Feast for Hope: <https://feedingal.org/feast-for-hope-gala/>

To join our monthly Dame volunteers, contact Dame Susan Swagler at susan@swagler.net. Our chapter is at the Food Bank every third Wednesday of the month from 1-3 p.m.



Above: Our members act as hostesses at the gala, pouring wine and telling attendees about the work LDEI does in the community. Middle right: Kay Reed's popular Shrimp and Lobster Salad (in a tin) will be on the menu at this year's gala.



Below right: A group of talented Dames—Fanoula Gulas, Tina Liollo, Kristal Bryant, Rita Bernhardt, Takeeka Goshay, and Telia Johnson—will be making a variety of desserts for a shareable tray of treats for each of the tables at the gala.



A Month in Birmingham

Chicago Dame Stacey Ballis spent January snowbirding in Birmingham, a city she'd never visited, and left having gained a new family of Dames.

by Stacey Ballis

One of the driving forces for my joining Les Dames D'Escoffier in Chicago back in 2017 was the way it would allow me to make connections to other women in the culinary and hospitality industries at other chapters.

The stories I had heard about members who travel showing up solo in a new city and immediately getting everything from local restaurant recommendations to gatherings hosted in their honor, often leading to deep friendships, that was a tantalizing prospect. It has been one of the greatest gifts of my life to take advantage of that secret handshake, and cold emails to strangers with that special "Chicago Dame reaching out..." subject line has resulted in now longstanding friendships with other women all over the country and abroad.

I have stayed at Dame's homes in London and New York and Atlanta. I have had countless wonderful dining companions at fabulous restaurants, and intimate dinner parties held for me in London, Paris and all over the US, and I have hosted them in turn here in Chicago.

But nothing could have prepared me for what would happen when I reached out to one of the Birmingham Dames I had connected with at Conference to say that my husband and I were planning to snowbird there for the month of January.

Having a local chapter had been a part of that decision-making for us,



Above: Cathy Sloss Jones, Leigh Sloss-Corra, Susan Swagler, and Stacey Ballis attended Mayor Randall Woodfin's book signing. At right: Cocktails at Sloan's.



since we are social people and one of the complications of Chicago winter is the natural hunkering and limitations on social life. We wanted a city with a vibrant food scene, and a place where the weather was not such a challenge to keeping socially active. We had a few local friends, and some friendly acquaintances we hoped to deepen relationships with, and I knew that having access to a vibrant LDEI

chapter would open some doors.

I did not know that former chapter President Leigh Sloss-Corra would appoint herself a one-woman tourism board, and that not only would I be able to reconnect with the other local Dames I had met at that same conference but would quickly meet and be adopted by so many other members, literally too many to name.

To say that the welcome was warm

does not do it justice. From including me in already planned official events ranging from cocktail hours to packing boxes at the local food bank, planning get-togethers in my honor, welcoming me into their homes, hosting us at their restaurants. Inviting us to events like a private surprise book-signing for the mayor, who was utterly charming and didn't seem at all put out that there were two strangers amidst the friends and family in the room. Sharing their secrets to the city, tips and tricks, and shopping recs.

Not just the endlessly fabulous Dame Gia McCollister saying "We love this restaurant so much." but following it up with "We'll take you there!" Not just current chapter President Sonthe Burge bringing me a bag of her famous homemade koulourakia Greek butter cookies, but then hosting a gathering in her house and teaching us all how to make them! And perhaps even more importantly, so many of them introducing my husband to theirs so that he could start to find his own group of Les Dudes.

We arrived as relative strangers, and left with family, there is no other way to describe it. Even other Dames near and far participated in securing our B'ham happiness, with visits from dear pals Atlanta Dames Angie Mosier, Gena Berry, and Carla Williams, who swooped in to hang out with us and introduce us to their local pals and family members, Sarah Worley from Nashville popped in to check on her local outpost of Biscuit Love and made time for dinner, and Chicago sister Carrie Nahabedian who made an email intro to a Birmingham couple who are regulars at her restaurant Brindille when they are in Chicago,

continued on page 8, see Snowbird



A group of Dames gathered to meet Stacey at Sonthe Burge's home, where they learned how to shape Sonthe's koulourakia (Greek butter cookies) and package them for Sweet Treats.



who immediately took us on a lunch adventure.

It is through these connections that we were able to not just find our footing in a city that I had never been to, and my husband had only visited once for business three decades earlier, but to truly build community. Not a day went by without a text or reach out from one of our new friends to share a thought about something we might want to see or do or eat, or to initiate plans. Through their intros, we found a fabulous house to rent for next winter, when we're planning on a two-month stay, since one

month was not nearly enough. We ate amazing food, shared wine and cocktails, and many laughs. We left feeling truly embraced, and that we had found our home away from home, and next year I might just have to become a dual member!

In the meantime, if Birmingham is at all on your list for a visit, and if it isn't, it should be, some of my own insider tips:

- Eat Sunday brunch at Demetri's, perhaps the best pancakes I have ever eaten, ditto the super savory grits.
- Walk the Sloss Furnaces self-guided tour, and don't skip the movie. It is not just the history of Birmingham, but in some import-

ant ways, the history of our nation.

- Lunch or dinner at El ZunZún, Dame Becky Satterfield's Mexican restaurant, deeply authentic and totally soulful. (Her flagship Satterfield's also continues to shine.)
- If you are there during the market months, Saturday at Pepper Place Market is a must!
- Sloan's, a gorgeous and super comfy bourbon and whiskey-focused bar that was one of our favorite hangs, owned by Dame Christina Saab and her husband, Tom.
- Want the authentic flavor of the city at home? Order a copy of *Magic City Cravings*, co-written by Dame Chanda Temple.

Grant and Scholarship Applications Are Live!

by Rachel West

The applications for this year's entrepreneur grants and scholarships are now live on our website. This is the wonderful reward for all of the fundraising work we do throughout the year.

The entrepreneur grants assist female-owned businesses in the food, culinary, and hospitality industry in Alabama with cash awards up to \$5,000 to help them expand and enhance their business.

The scholarships for education and continuing education are awarded to female applicants pursuing culinary or pastry arts, farming, beverage management, hospitality, nutrition and dietetics, or agriculture coursework at four-year universities and community colleges in Alabama.

Applications for both are due on Friday, March 21, 2025.

According to Anna Theoktisto, the chair of the grant and schol-

arship committee, the changes for this year are:

- We are giving more money per scholarship this year, which will hopefully make a bigger impact on the scholarship winners' education and lives.
- We added a short video section and headshot to the application.
- We have opened up the scholarship to seniors in high school who have applied/enrolled in culinary school.
- We've opened the scholarships up to anyone in college as long as they are not in their final year.

"This allows us to reach more students and hopefully get a larger pool of applicants," said Theoktisto.

For our entrepreneurship grant, a short video section and headshot section were added to the application this year. The goal with these additions is to help us get to know the applicants better and also help with the newsletter and social media once the scholarships and

grants have been awarded.

Theoktisto has also completely revamped the scoring system, which will hopefully make the process even smoother this year.

Committee members will be given about one week to read through the applications and fill out the score sheets, which will be completed in Google sheets. There will be a scoring rubric for both scholarship applications and grant applications.

Committee members will judge the quality of the application and how well each question is answered. They will need to be on the lookout for AI-generated answers, i.e. answers that sound nice but don't say a whole lot.

Please share this opportunity on social media and encourage anyone you know who would qualify to apply. We're hoping to spread the word about this opportunity for both students and entrepreneurs.

More Than a Meal: Telling the Stories Behind Birmingham's Flavor

by Chanda Temple

I've always believed that when you truly understand what drives an entrepreneur, a chef, or a baker, you taste their story in every bite. And that's what I wanted to present when I started my food blog, www.chandatemplewrites.com. In it, you will find stories about dishes and the journeys people take in getting those dishes to the table.

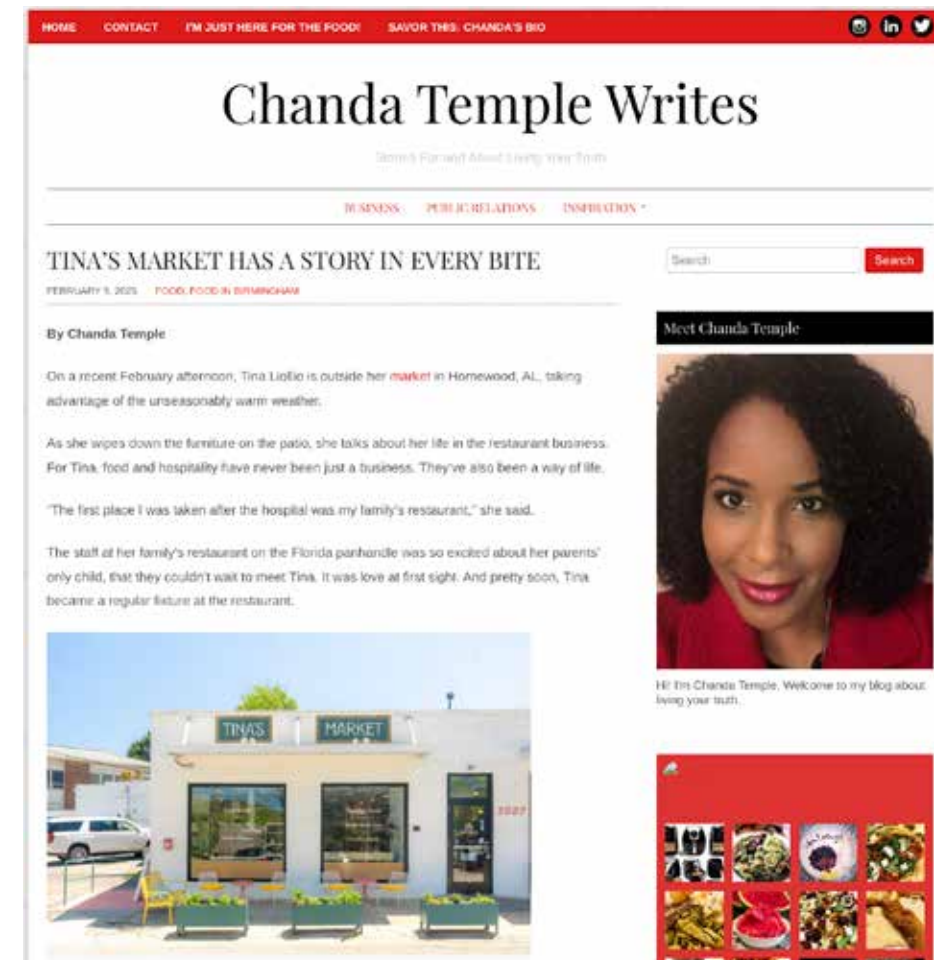
There are the late nights, early mornings, and risky leaps that come with building something meaningful.

Take Emily Hall's "Break-Up Cookie." On the surface is a perfect cookie that's chewy, rich, unforgettable. But behind it? A story about finding sweetness after tough endings. Emily took something as universal as a breakup and turned it into a delicious reminder that life's toughest moments can still lead to something good. You don't just eat the cookie. You feel the comeback.

Or consider Tanesha Sims-Summers' Naughty But Nice Kettle Corn. Tanesha is popping up everywhere as an example of what joy and hustle look like when mixed together. Her kettle corn is light and sweet, and her story of how she built a business that brings people together is savory, bag after bag.

Tina's Market shows how simple meals can carry deep meaning. Tina Liollio puts a taste of her family roots into every bite, making her carryouts feel super personal. Her food nourishes you, and her stories, and social media postings, inspire you.

Then there's Crystal Peterson's Yo' Mama's, where the restaurant's



Dame Chanda Temple has written about a number of Dame-owned businesses on her food blog, with more in the works.

chicken and waffles and more make you feel like you really are eating at someone's mama's house. The mission of Crystal and her mother is to serve food made with love and intention as well as tradition.

And K&J's Elegant Pastries? Kristal Bryant's Instagram-worthy photos pull you in and her desserts keep you coming back again and again. Every cake, milkshake and cupcake are proof of what happens when you refuse to give up on a dream.

Lastly, Lindsey Noto-King's Feast Bham proves that food can be a connector. Lindsey creates more than meals. She creates experiences.

Her focus on shared dining experiences tells a bigger story about how food brings us to the table, where we connect, reflect and celebrate.

Each story from these Birmingham Dames and others are distinct, showing how women in the food and beverage industry know how to set a table and set a stage with products that are delicious and dynamic.

Because when you tell the story right, a cookie becomes a comeback. A market becomes a movement. And a meal becomes a memory.

Happy eating! Happy reading!

Dames Gather at Magnolia Point for Red Beans Roadshow

by Leigh Sloss-Corra

Mid-January is the beginning of Mardi Gras season, which made it the perfect time for legendary New Orleans photographer and food icon Pableaux Johnson to bring what he called his Red Beans Roadshow to Magnolia Point in Birmingham.

Magnolia Point is an upscale fish camp-style eatery, and part of the Pihakis Restaurant Group (PRG), that opened downtown near 5 Points South last July. One of the owners is Atlanta Dame Angie Mosier, a much respected superstar chef and catering whiz, and an old friend of Pableaux's.

To kick off Mardi Gras and promote the restaurant, she persuaded Pableaux to bring his travelling pop-up dinner to Birmingham. Dame Rachel Ishee, who handles PRG's marketing, shared the event with our chapter. Meanwhile, Chicago Dame Stacey Ballis encouraged our BHM Dames to come up, since she is old friends with Angie and Pableaux, and had already invited Atlanta Dame Carla Williams and her husband to come too.

Because a few BHM Dames were on a hospitality campaign to welcome Dame Stacey and her husband to Birmingham, Dames Gia McCollister, Fanoula Gulas, Jenn Nix, Agatha Pihakis, and I decided to drag along some of our husbands too and attend.

If you haven't been there yet, Magnolia Point is an absolutely



Jenn Nix, Fanoula Gulas, Leigh Sloss-Corra, Chicago Dame Stacey Ballis, Gia McCollister, Rachel Ishee, Agatha Pihakis, and Atlanta Dame Angie Mosier gathered for Pableaux Johnson's Red Beans Roadshow.

gorgeous restaurant, installed in a restored historic building on 23rd St. and Magnolia Ave., near Alabama Art Supply. The developers spared no expense to appoint it with handcrafted furnishings, art, and lighting. With the Southtown redevelopment neighborhood in progress a couple of blocks away, it promises to become a staple of that neighborhood's dining scene.

I had alerted Rachel that "a few Dames would be coming," so when we arrived, there were two beautiful tables reserved for us with the LDEI logo displayed. It was a brutally cold night, and we were quickly

warmed up by a delicious selection of craft cocktails. Servers passed around a variety of hearty appetizers. There was much conversation and buzzing as people mingled. Then it was time for Pableaux's welcome.

Pableaux is a long-time member of the Southern Foodways Alliance and beloved in the Southern food scene. He's kind of a cult figure so there were lots of hugs and lots of chat and fun.

Per the tradition of the Red Beans Roadshow, before going into eat, Pableaux explained the history of the event, and how eating red beans became a Monday night tradition



At left: Gia McCollister was one of the Dames who attended the event, held at Magnolia Point, where Dame Rachel Ishee had reserved two beautiful tables for LDEI members. At right: Legendary New Orleans photographer and food icon Pableaux Johnson brought his traveling Red Bean Roadshow pop-up to Birmingham to kick off the Mardi Gras season.

in New Orleans for people working in food service. (It was the easiest and most nourishing dish to make and enjoy on a Monday, the day off for restaurant staff who would have been working around the clock all weekend long.)

He also explained why the menu would be simple, what it would entail, and some of the rules, which were to be friendly and talk to the people around you at the communal tables. His speech was funny and touching. I had met Pableaux at the SFA Symposium 10 years ago and became an instant fan. Reunited, we exchanged hugs

and promised to get back together soon.

Everyone took their seats. The servers brought out steaming bowls of red beans and rice—exquisite, lush, salty, and tender. Honestly I've never had a better tasting bowl in my life. We were encouraged to have seconds and a few of us did so happily. They paired nicely with a crisp Albarino and all in all it was a sparkling evening.

When it was time for dessert, Pableaux introduced Angie, the chef and wait staff, and there was applause and gratitude and so much love in the room. Dessert was

Key lime pie and coconut cream pie—both were amazing. Then with more hugs the evening was over and we bundled up to head home.

Honestly it was such a wonderful event and made infinitely more special because of the Dames that gathered to enjoy it together.

As a heartbreaking side note, 10 days later Pableaux collapsed and died at a second line event in New Orleans, photographing his beloved community during a parade that no doubt would have been followed by red beans and rice. He was 59 years old.



The Annual Holiday Party Spreads Good Cheer

by Jes Bennett

Birmingham Dames gathered on December 16th for the jolliest event of the year, the annual holiday party.

This year's holiday party was held at The Lumbar, a neighborhood cocktail bar, restaurant, and creative space located in Pepper Place.

The Lumbar's owner, Rylie Hightower, was herself the recipient of an entrepreneurial grant from the Birmingham chapter, and Hightower's creative skills with food and beverage were well on display.

Dames received a welcome cocktail (or mocktail) at the door before moving through the lounge to mingle. Stations throughout the event offered cheese and charcuterie, chafing dishes of hot sliders and mini sandwiches, mini cups of chicken salad served over tender greens, and plenty of good cheer. The bar expertly crafted holiday takes on sbagliatos, espresso martinis, and old fashioned.

Santa Claus was also in attendance, tapped for the honor of distributing the annual door prizes. Two prizes were awarded this year—one naughty and one nice!

Even through the jolly celebration, the chapter's mission was still in mind. Dames gathered handbags, dubbed Blessing Bags, filled with toiletries and cosmetics to donate to The WellHouse, a residential program for female survivors of human trafficking. Eighty handbags in total were donated, echoing the spirit of generosity central to both the holidays and Les Dames (see page 13 for more on those).

A big thanks to The Lumbar, Rylie, and her staff for helping our chapter be merry and bright!



Above: Dames gathered at The Lumbar for the annual holiday party.

At right: Telia Johnson and Santa at this year's party.

Below: This year, Dames donated 80 handbags, dubbed Blessing Bags, filled with toiletries and cosmetics for the residents of The WellHouse.



Blessing Bags Deliver Christmas Joy to The WellHouse Residents

by Sonthe B. Burge and Stefanie Maloney

Christmas arrived early this year at The WellHouse, benefiting 30 women who are survivors of human trafficking.

Through the generous contributions of our LDEI members and supporters, we collected 80 new or gently used handbags that were subsequently filled with toiletries, cosmetic items, and other thoughtful treats for the women.

On December 18th, Dames

Charbett Cauthen, Christina Saab, Stefanie Maloney, Sonthe Burge, and Sonthe's mother, who was visiting for the holiday season, delivered the handbags to surprise the residents during a festive holiday gathering filled with enjoyment and fellowship.

The handbags symbolized hope and compassion for many women who arrived at The WellHouse with few possessions.

Owing to the success of this outreach initiative, each resident had the opportunity to select two

handbags. The recipients expressed immense joy and gratitude for such generous and supportive gifts.

Several women with upcoming job interviews and speaking invitations conveyed that the handbags will add a finishing touch to their professional attire, and foster a sense of self-confidence.

The LDEI WellHouse Committee extends its gratitude to every individual who contributed to this initiative. Your demonstrated kindness greatly impacts the lives of these women.

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Recreation Center. If you want to kick-start your weekend, go dance with Erin each Saturday at 9:30 a.m.!

Dame Andrea Kirkland, RD delivered an informative and educational talk entitled Mood Food, and our month wrapped up with an intensive cybersecurity Zoom session with Dame Wesley Lassen and Jennifer Zelko, a systems administrator and cyber security manager at Buffalo Rock-Pepsi.

In February, Dames had a front row seat at Jack's headquarter in Homewood. Dame Billie Jo Warra took us through the ideation process to create menu items. Let me just say, we have some very creative Dames.

Dame Gia McCollister was very busy in January and February planning for Sweet Treats, which was a huge success. Thanks to Gia and the committee, our chapter participation was better than ever this year with more bakers and more volunteers to pack, promote, and work at the tent.

Additionally, many Dames purchased boxes and encouraged their family and friends to purchase boxes, which accounted for a large portion of the donations. Your support for this event is the reason it is so successful. Kudos to Team Sweet Treats and our members for their gifts of time, talent, and treasure!!

The Social Media Committee met in January to plan for 2025. Dame Christiana Roussell created a LinkedIn page for our chapter. Please send a request to connect with Les Dames d'Escoffier Birmingham there. We now have a presence on three social media platforms: Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Please read all emails from the Social Media Committee; they depend on members for content that drives our success.

Dames are gearing up for the Feast for Hope Gala at The Community Food Bank of Central Alabama. I hope you will join us on March 1st to work this event.

Remember the third Wednesday

of every month is designated as our LDEI volunteer day at the food bank. Volunteer numbers at the food bank typically drop in cold weather, so if you are free on March 19th from 1-3 p.m., please come. See the email or Slack post from Dame Susan Swagler to sign up.

Food Connects Us is the theme for National Nutrition Month, which is celebrated every March. Registered Dietitian Nutritionists are nutrition experts, and we have eight RDNs in our chapter: Anne Cain, Clara Darling, Sidney Fry, Andrea Kirkland, Pat Terry, Rachel West, Carolyn Williams, and me. Be on the lookout for our tips on our LDEI social media. Also please register for LDEI Online to see Andrea Kirkland and me present a program on Mediterranean Meal Planning: Advice to Boost Your Health and Save Your Sanity. Monday March 24th from 11 a.m. to noon CST.

That's all for now. May March and each month ahead be kind to each of us.

Dame Gia McCollister takes the cake for LDEI involvement

by Donna Cornelius

We members of LDEI's Birmingham chapter can't be blamed if one of our members reminds us of the Energizer Bunny. That's because Dame Gia McCollister is full of energy—and she never stops going!

A founding member of our chapter when it was formed in 2013, Gia has involved herself in many different LDEI committees and activities. Currently, she's the driving force behind our Sweet Treats fundraiser and a dynamic member of our social media committee. She's a supportive friend, a strong advocate for LDEI, and just plain fun to be around.

As one might expect, Gia has a fascinating past. Born in Caracas, Venezuela, she grew up in the countryside. Her mother's side of the family was from Spain and Cuba; her mom came to Venezuela at age 3. Her father's family came from Italy and France.

Gia went to college in Caracas and studied psychology, focusing on children with learning disabilities. Back in her hometown, she had a busy schedule, seeing patients during the day and teaching at her former college at night.

"Then I got married and moved to New York," Gia said. "I've lived so many places—in the U.S. three times, London twice, Toronto, Costa Rica. My son was born in New York and my daughter in London."

It was in NYC that Gia really got into baking.



Gia grew up seeing her mom and aunt bake, but she really got into baking when she lived in New York City. She took classes to improve her skills and ended up making her wedding cake when she married Porter.

"I grew up seeing my mom make cookies and cakes to sell," she said. "She was good at baking. I remember coming home from college, and she had all these orders, decorating cakes. It was a natural process for me."

Gia's aunt also was an expert baker.

"She was famous in the capital for making wedding cakes," she said. "She didn't give out her recipes, but I watched and learned."

Baking was a great way for Gia to express her artistic side, so in NYC, she began searching for cake decorating equipment. At a shop called the Chocolate Gallery (now NY Cake), she learned that the store was offering classes.

"My English wasn't good, but they said, 'We have a Spanish teacher,'" she said. "They were teaching a class on making sugar flowers out of gum paste. A Colombian teacher was teaching a rose-making class the next month. We became close friends."

Classes were the best way to learn her craft at the time because, as Gia said, "There was no YouTube then!"

Gia and some of her classmates began competing—and winning medals—in a competition called the Salon of Culinary Art, organized by the Société Culinaire Philanthropique. Even after she moved to places like Toronto and London, she would return to compete with her friends.

Birmingham Bound

So how did she come to live in Birmingham?

"For love," Gia said, laughing. "I was divorced and living in Miami. I had a craving for my Latin roots, and Venezuela was a mess. Miami has a Latin flavor, but it's more organized."

In Miami, she worked as a representative for a health company but continued baking and decorating cakes for friends—and she met Porter, her future husband, there.

"He is from Georgia, lived in Montgomery for a long time and was living in Birmingham," Gia said. "Southern boys have that charm—they open the door for you. He had three children, and I had two, so we have five kids between us—the perfect family!"

Gia is especially proud of something she achieved before the wedding.

"I was in the citizenship process when we got engaged and became a citizen the week before we married," she said. "I wanted to make sure his friends knew that I was an American first. It was a lot of work. I was so proud!"

In addition to the romantic side of her relationship, Gia raised a practical concern with her groom-to-be.

"I wanted to know: Where will I work in Birmingham?" she said.

The answer to that question has a bit of a backstory that began soon after Porter proposed.

"I told him, 'I'm going to make our wedding cake,'" she said. "He had no idea what I was capable of doing."

"He was looking at the cake in progress and sees all these sugar flowers—it blew his mind. He said, 'Well, Gia, you've found your business, and I'm going to help you.'"



Gia opened her first store, Gia's Cakes in Crestline Village, when she moved to Birmingham. She made wedding cakes, birthday cakes, cookies, and cupcakes.

That led to her new business: Gia's Cakes in Crestline Village.

"Gia's Cakes was my first store," she said. "That was a dream that came true."

She especially enjoyed working with Christopher Confero, a wedding planner and event designer.

"We had the best brides who really let me express my creativity," Gia said. "I also did a lot of birthday cakes. We had to have cookies and cupcakes, which was not what I envisioned. It took a lot of time and was a lot of work."

While the store is now closed, Gia has no regrets.

"It was a nice experience," she said. "I didn't know the Birmingham market then. I was a little ahead of the times."

A Passion for Pound Cakes

These days, Gia continues to love being in the kitchen.

"I still love to bake but just for the people I want to bake for," she said.

"We've had two weddings in the family, and I had the resources to make the cakes. My son is getting married in London in September, and I may decorate the cake."

She and Porter are cooking companions.

"We love to cook ethnic food," she said. "He's a really good cook and is especially good at braising. I put a little more color in his life. I introduced him to Latin cooking, and we do Moroccan and Middle Eastern. One year, we did a Jamai-

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can Christmas with jerk chicken and other Jamaican dishes.”

At one time, Gia owned about 500 cookbooks.

“I had to get rid of some when we downsized but still have a lot,” she said.

Gia has some tips for those who want to improve their baking skills. “You need to be friend with your oven,” she said. “Convection and conventional ovens are two different things. And also, measure your ingredients carefully.”

One of her favorite things to make is pancakes – “the thicker the better,” she said.

She also likes to make pound cakes. She’s apt to add her own twists, like cardamom, lavender and lemon zest. And while she introduced her husband to many ethnic foods, he taught her a Southern creation: toasting pound cake with butter.

“The first time he did it, I thought, what the heck is he doing?” Gia said.

A love for baking—and learning

After Gia became an LDEI member, she went to the organization’s international conference with fellow Dames Angela Schmidt and Becky Satterfield.

“The main thing I learned was that we needed to be making money,” she said. “A woman from one chapter said they had raised \$178,000. I said, ‘Ladies, this is serious.’”

She came back from the conference a little intimidated but determined to help the chapter boost its finances. Since that time, she’s been a big part of our chapter’s successful fundraising efforts.

“I’m so proud of what we’ve



Gia and some of her classmates in New York City began competing—and winning—medals in the Salon of Culinary Art competition. Even after she moved away from NYC, she would return to compete with her friends.



achieved since 2013,” she said.

Right now, one of Gia’s focuses is social media.

“I’m very proud of what we’ve done,” she said. “Social media is our best PR, and we all need to share the posts.”

This time of year, Gia works hard on her brainchild, Sweet Treats.

“Five years ago, the boxes were \$25,” she said. “Now, in our fifth year, they’re \$50. This is an easy, sweet fundraiser to put together.”

While the proceeds from the Sweet Treats event allow us to add to our scholarship and grant funds, Gia said the goal isn’t just the money but community outreach and branding.

“We have a lot of great bakers, and it really helps them,” she said. “It’s at a different time of year from Champagne & Fried Chicken and also more affordable.”

While Birmingham is still home, Gia is still a bit of a globetrotter.

“My husband retired last year, so we travel to see our children,” she said. “We rent a house so we can cook for them. We have two kids in Nashville so we went there last. My daughter will visit us in the spring. When we go to London for my son’s wedding in September, we’ll stay in Europe until January.”

“So I love to travel, cook, and read, mostly nonfiction at the moment. I’m learning something new all the time. I’m learning about AI and any technology that helps us run the social media. I’m curious and I love to learn!”

This vivacious and committed Dame also gives our group a lot of love and attention.

“I put a lot of time into Les Dames,” Gia said. “I want more participation. I want us to leave a legacy behind us. I’m proud of what we’ve accomplished in 11 years”

Remembering Nathalie Dupree



Nathalie Dupree, Becky Satterfield, Angela Schmidt, and CiCi Williamson met to start the Birmingham chapter of Les Dames d’Escoffier in 2013.

by Becky Satterfield

One of the best moments of my life happened when I chauffeured Nathalie from The Hampton Inn to go to dinner at Highlands Bar and Grill to meet Dame Angela Schmidt, our initial founder, to discuss our initial LDEI Birmingham meeting.

Nathalie and Dame CiCi Williamson had flown to Birmingham to have a mentoring session with 50ish of our freshly chosen Dames at our chapter’s first meeting.

They shared some dos and don’ts of running a chapter and becoming a bonafide Dame. To say the least, it was a great meeting. I had always been a huge fan of her cooking show and collected two of her cookbooks that are to this day well-used.

While living in Houston in the early ‘80s, never did I dream that I would have an opportunity as up close and personal. She was so warm and down-to-earth and, as time went, on I enjoyed seeing her and sitting with her at symposiums

in Charleston, SFA conferences in Oxford, and LDEI conferences.

Fortunately for me I had so many conversations with her about everything you would want to know but may be afraid to ask. Soon I learned she was a straight shooter, which was comforting to me, as I much prefer to cut to the chase about most things. As busy as we all are there is no time for lollygagging.

The other thing that became familiar was her affection for Diet Coke. When she and Cynthia Graubart were coming to Birmingham to promote their cookbook, *Mastering the Art of Southern Cooking*, I talked to her as she was driving in from Charleston and asked if she needed more Diet Coke. She said, “yes!”, so I went to The Pig in Homewood, quickly grabbed a 12-pack, and met her and Cynthia at The Little Professor for their book signing. Needless to say I bought two signed copies. I now hold that book closer to my heart as the world will not be as bright without Nathalie.

South Alabama Restaurant Roundup

by Susan Swagler

There is deliciousness all over our state—in towns large and small. A recent swing through LA (Lower Alabama) yielded some true gems that are worth stopping for on your way to the Coast. You might even make them your ultimate destination.

Great Food for a Greater Purpose: Rayza's in Daphne offers global flavors, good vibes.

You can taste the world at Rayza's Sushi, Steak and Seafood in Daphne. That's because chef-owner Mochamad Rayza's experience spans the globe.

The South Alabama restaurant, owned by Rayza and his wife, Laura, offers beautiful, inventive sushi; delicious steaks; and lots of fresh seafood from the Gulf and beyond. Bold and unexpected dishes draw people in, too—from shrimp and grits spicy with Panang red curry to a traditional Indonesian chicken satay with rich, creamy peanut sauce to fresh fettuccine with beef rendang Bolognese to house-made sweet potato, marshmallow, and pecan caramel crunch ice cream.

Rayza, as he is known to all, is from Jakarta, Indonesia. He fell in love with the art of cooking at a young age, landing his first job in the kitchen of a five-star hotel called Nikko. At age 19, he traveled to Dubai for more culinary and hospitality training. Then he decided to realize his lifelong dream of living in the United States. He began his journey here in the galley of a cruise ship that operated out of



Rayza's pork belly appetizer (above) and The Rayza Roll are just two of the dishes that offer global flavors at this South Alabama restaurant.



Miami, gaining experience cooking a wide variety of cuisines.

"Rayza's is the culmination of experience and flavor," the chef says. "It is the culmination of a lot of places that I've been and also the experiences that I've had ... as I've worked in America ... over the past 16 years in different places.

Rayza's offers a variety of different

tastes and different flavors. There's something for everyone."

Rayza and Laura opened Rayza's in June of 2023. A portion of the restaurant's sales helps pay for Bible translations in Indonesia. Rayza, raised a Muslim, converted to Christianity as an adult; this mission is close to both their hearts. "As Christian (business) owners,"

Laura says, "we are very passionate about helping people, about helping reach people who don't have the good news of the Bible. ... On our website, we say, 'food with a purpose,' and that's the purpose we're talking about. We try to help others in need as well by reaching out to the (local) community, too."

The restaurant's promise, Chef Rayza says, "is to bring our guests the story of our passion and purpose through culturally diverse dishes and brave new flavors. Flavors that tell our story, and diversity that shares who we are."

On the plate, that looks like lobster spring rolls; bulgogi steak; a delicious pork belly appetizer with gochujang BBQ sauce; miso soup and coconut soup; Instagram-worthy cheesy Korean corn dip; truffle fries; blistered shishitos with togarashi, peanuts, and a mango vinaigrette; the freshest seasonal local catch; and colorful, made-to-order sushi of all kinds.

Food here is made from scratch using high-quality, fresh ingredients. They make their own cocktail syrups and buy produce from farmers they know; they fly in specialty fish from Japan for sushi.

Rayza says his restaurant is not just a business but "a way to add value and make a difference in the lives of others."

He says: "I've had the privilege of being a chef for over 20 years. What a gift! I'll never take it for granted, the journey. But I'm a believer, and I believe that each of us, we have a gift already that we received, to serve one another." His and Laura's vision, even the restaurant's location, was the result of prayer, he says. "I know that my gift is being with people. One thing that I'm passionate about is just leading, first of all, my team and in this place,



The menu at The B Pub in Andalusia changes with the seasons, adding fun flavors and interesting preparations to the menu, but even classics like the dirty martini stand out here—the glass is properly iced, the cocktail expertly assembled and shaken to order.

just being out there with my clients and building relationships with my community."

Rayza's Sushi, Steak, Seafood
9475 U.S. Hwy 90, Suite 210,
Daphne, AL 36526
(251) 383-2060
<https://www.rayzasrestaurant.com/>

Cheers to The B!

The B Pub in Andalusia is a small-town bar with big aspirations.

Opening a bar in a small town in the Bible Belt takes some faith. And vision. And a certain amount of determination. Kyle and Kim Baumgartner, owners of The B Pub in Andalusia, have all that and more.

The B Pub a small-town bar with a big-city approach to craft cocktails and a lovely, carefully curated

setting for enjoying them. It's also the answer to a need this community might not have known it needed—a family-friendly place to gather and laugh and relax and get to know other people.

The Baumgartners opened The B Pub three years ago in an old Coca-Cola plant in downtown Andalusia with the idea of bringing people together.

"I think when you come into The B, the thing that you can expect is a lot of the 'Cheers mentality,'" Kyle says, referring to the vibe made popular by the classic sitcom. "You enter as strangers, but you leave as friends. It's very warm, very comfortable for all walks of life. That was our goal when we started this; we wanted a neighborhood

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bar where all people are welcome.”

He says the mayor might sit next to the guy who picks up the trash, and he might be sitting next to the mailman. “Everybody in the community visits our bar.”

Like a fine-dining restaurant, they follow the seasons here. So cool weather sees the Fallen Apple cocktail, and that segued into a similar drink called Newton’s Law! that is made with apple butter; they set it on fire just for fun.

There’s a pumpkin-spiced white Russian and a black Manhattan with rye whiskey and Amaro Montenegro. Even classics like a dirty martini stand out here—the glass is properly iced while the drink is expertly assembled and shaken to order. Kyle also makes a great smoked Old Fashioned.

“Our number one seller is the Jameson Juice Box,” Kyle says. “It was inspired by a good friend of mine in Birmingham, the owner of Lou’s Pub, Mike Carpri.

He made a drink, and it was very involved. It had Jameson orange (Irish whiskey) in it. ... I wanted to simplify it. So, we created a drink that literally takes you back to childhood. The first time I tried it, it reminded me of drinking a Hi-C juice box as a kid. So, the Jameson Juice Box was born.”

Aside from the lounge, a large part of The B is a family-friendly establishment.

The Ballroom (the indoor patio), with large TV screens for game days and an old cooler full of board games for whenever, and the outside patio, where they often have live music, are open to people of all ages; the lounge is 21 and over.

It’s all tobacco-free and vape-free. People are expected—and required—

to follow the written rules here.

“We do set a very high bar, no pun intended, on what we expect from our patrons and everyone who walks through the door,” Kim says. “We want everyone to feel comfortable.”

The B attracts a loyal band of regulars, but it’s worth a dedicated drive or even a short stopover if you’re passing through.

“I think what we do best is we bring people together,” Kyle says. He enjoys introducing two people who might not have ever otherwise met outside of The B. “It’s my favorite thing to go, ‘Good people, meet good people.’ We’ve had relationships formed here that have turned into ... lifelong friendships. We’ve had couples meet here. We’ve had engagements here; we’ve had weddings here.”

Kim says, “My favorite part is showing people how to have fun on a different level than what they think ‘bar fun’ is. That you can dress up in a nice outfit and go somewhere and have wonderful conversations and lots of laughter. That is my favorite thing—the laughter.”

The B Pub
239 Church St.
Andalusia, AL 36420
(334) 923-1687
<https://www.facebook.com/thebpub/>

Deliciously Enterprising: Corks & Cattle in Enterprise is a fine-dining restaurant and so much more.

The wide, open Wiregrass region of Southeastern Alabama has known grazing cattle since colonial times. Fine wines, not so much. But Corks & Cattle Market & Café celebrates both in delicious, inventive, locally

sourced ways.

This restaurant in Enterprise, owned by Dena Smith, with Chef Zaine Young leading the kitchen, offers exciting dishes (including great steaks) and a world of wines.

Located in the historic Rawls Cotton Gin building with original brick, repurposed tin, and iron-work, and 100-year-old beams, the place bills itself as a café, but it’s much more than that. It’s a butcher shop with meats cuts to order; it’s a wine shop with well over a thousand bottles from around the world (there’s no corkage fee if you pick one to drink while you’re here and there are frequent wine tastings and regular, sold-out wine dinners); it’s a general store full of locally sourced ingredients such as honey and cheeses and Dena’s own family-recipe gourmet barbecue sauce. There’s a handsome bar with craft cocktails and mocktails (they try to cater to everyone) and a breezy patio festive with lights.

It’s a fine-dining destination that is changing the way locals eat and attracting foodies from farther afield, too.

It’s also one woman’s way of making her place in the world.

Dena, who was born in Enterprise, has worked as an accountant for years for her family’s business in Dothan. When the first of her three children left for college, she felt the need for a change, too.

“Motherhood defines us in a lot of ways,” she says. “Even though I’ve always worked, I worked part time to work around my kids’ schedules as much as I could. ... With my child leaving home, I still had two kids at home, but I just felt like I needed to throw myself into something else. I knew they were all getting to the age to



The menu at Corks & Cattle in Enterprise offers a range of exciting dishes, including award-winning steaks, wines, and craft cocktails and mocktails.

leave, and it didn’t sit well with me. I know we raise our children to fly—and mine have flown beautifully from the nest—but this was my baby. I threw a lot into this to create something new.”

She says she wanted her boys to see “that I was strong and independent. That I could do something on my own.”

This is a place run by women. The delicious dishes from Chef Zaine Young’s kitchen reflect a lifelong love of food.

Zaine, who comes from a family of cooks and bakers, grew up in Indiana and worked in her mom’s restaurant from the time she could hold a pan. She was entering baking competitions through 4-H when she was only eight, and by age 16 she could—and did on the weekends—run her family’s restaurant kitchen.

I make a new menu, people get more and more excited. They want to try it. It makes me feel good.”

That translates to gochujang-marinated lamb lollipops; coffee-crust-ed Akaushi wagyu rib eye with bourbon gravy; bacon-wrapped dates filled with pistachios and gorgonzola; a brunch tart made with pears, prosciutto, gorgonzola custard, and a rosemary crust topped with lavender honey; a lunchtime pulled-pork “Piggy Melt” with C&C barbecue sauce, Swiss, and Cheddar, crispy onions, and homemade slaw on a brioche bun; caramelized onions, apple butter, and candied jalapeños on a wagyu burger; house-made bacon jam, chipotle goat cheese, and onion straws on a bison burger; filet with a portobello mushroom cap.

Both Dena and Zaine share a philosophy of treating everyone with love and respect, and it comes together beautifully and deliciously here with each customer served, each dish plated.

Corks & Cattle Market & Café
102 West Lee Street
Enterprise, AL 36330
(334) 475-3217
<https://www.corksandcattle.com/>

Go to savor.blog, for more details on these places and more.

Let's Toast

Jenn Nix is proud to share Fork & Leaf Travel is celebrating 5th Year Anniversary! This spring, the custom luxury travel company will announce an expansion to wellness vacations which is a natural fit with the culinary and nature niche.



Rachel A. Ishee, former VP of marketing for Pihakis Restaurant Group, has launched her own marketing company, Cravings Creative Marketing Agency, and is excited to welcome restaurants and food related businesses to her client roster. With 10 years of experience, she understands all aspects of food & beverage business, and is excited to offer her services to Dames and other hospitality businesses. To learn more about services visit cravings-creative.com (<http://cravings-creative.com>) or reach Rachel directly at Rachel@cravings-creative.com.



Crystal Peterson opened the brand new location of Yo' Mama's, the popular Birmingham eatery she owns and runs with her mother, Denise Peterson, in January. With significantly more space and capacity, the restaurant offers its famous chicken and waffles on the expand-



ed menu, and space for private parties. It even has robot servers! In its 10 years of operation, Yo' Mama's has won several awards, been featured on the Food Network, and welcomed countless well-known and celebrity guests, including Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, Hillary Clinton, actor Omari Hardwicke, and NBA great Dominique Williams.

Market Founder **Cathy Sloss Jones** and Market Executive Director **Leigh Sloss-Corra** are excited to be celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Farmers Market at Pepper Place in downtown Birmingham this year.



The now established, award-winning, and beloved certified farmers' market opened in June of 2000 with seven tents in the parking lot of what had been for decades the neighborhood of the neglected and run-down Dr. Pepper bottling plant. Twenty-five years later, the market operates year-round, with 85 vendors weekly, live music, chef demos, wellness programs, and over 120,000 followers on social media. A large roster of approved Alabama-only farmers, food producers, and artisans keep the offerings lively.

The 25th Anniversary will be marked with special events; celebrations honoring the farmers, vendors, and supporters of the past two decades; and the return of

popular programs that promote LDEI, including the Sweet Treats fundraiser (February), Women in Food Month, and FOOD+Culture Fest (September). Details can be found on the market website and social channels at [@pepperplace-market.com](https://www.pepperplace-market.com).

Colleen Duffley, owner of the award-winning bespoke Andiamo Lodge in Mentone, Alabama is offering a weekend of teaching, conversation, and dining



with James Beard winner, chef, and cheese maker Grande Dame Paula Lambert on March 14-16. This is one of many Dame- and women-focused food and design events being organized this spring and summer by Colleen at Andiamo. A full schedule is available on their website. She and her husband are also working on an Andiamo cookbook, to be published by Rizzoli in 2026.

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Birmingham Chapter
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