



Les Dames d'Escoffier
INTERNATIONAL



Founded in 2013

Ideibirmingham.org

Fall 2022

President's Note

Dear Dames,

"Birmingham does everything right!"

This was how a recent interview with an LDEI Quarterly writer started before any questions were asked. Our reputation is spreading!

Looking back, when I assumed the role of president in August 2020, we were still in a lockdown mode due to the pandemic. We needed to plan our annual fundraiser and maintain a presence, growing our chapter stronger than ever. Inspired by the "drive by" and curbside concept that many restaurants had embraced, and particularly the curbside market at Pepper Place, we decided to do a "drive by" fundraiser.

A large farm basket was the inspiration, and we took off from there! We developed a Southern-inspired menu with a French twist, and Champagne & Fried Chicken was born. In order to have all Dames present, teams were created with assignments for all. We dressed in jeans and white shirts, and everyone wore a mask that read "Merci Y'all!"

The event was so successful we planned to do it again in 2021. That fall we raised \$133,000, more than doubling what we made the year

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Culinary Classes at WellHouse

Monthly lessons will share cooking basics and hopefully inspire kitchen confidence



Dames Sonthe Burge (at right) and Pat Terry are leading LDEI-Bham's cooking class program at WellHouse. Learn more about it and how you can help on page 10.



Champagne & Fried Chicken Invites Guests to ‘Eat in the Streets’

by Susan Swagler

Our annual fundraiser, Champagne & Fried Chicken, is shaping up nicely and will include familiar, favorite dishes as well as the opportunity to dine on site. The drive-through, pick-up picnic is set for October 2 at Pepper Place. Guests will get their picnics between 3 and 5 p.m., and we’re inviting them to stay and eat and visit with us. We’ll have a band for entertainment.

The menu will feature foods prepared entirely by our Dames! The gourmet picnic for two will offer a choice of gluten-free Southern-fried chicken from Crystal Peterson (and her mom, Ms. Denise) at Yo’ Mama’s Restaurant or a vegetable frittata from Joy Smith of Sorelle. Kathy G. Mezrano of Kathy G. & Co. will make the potato salad with shallot vinaigrette and herbs. Kay Reed of IZ Weddings and Events will make the kale salad with dried fruits and greens from Margaret Ann Snow of Snow’s Bend Farm. Ashley McMakin will provide her delicious biscuits; Stacey Craig of The Bright Star will supply corn-bread muffins. And Betsy McAtee and her team at Dreamland Bar-B-Que will make the banana pudding. The picnic bag also will have cheese and pears and some honey from Eastaboga Bee Company.

We will include a chilled bottle of Cremant de Loire and pack the picnic into a reusable market bag with our logo.

We will have flowers from Deborah Stone and her Stone Hollow Farmstead. Deborah says she always keeps growing the flowers until our event each year.

And we’ll offer two cocktails from our mixologist Dames. Laura Newman of Queen’s Park and Neon Moon will wow us with a whisky cocktail; she’s known for her inventive approach to classic drinks. So, start your picnic with that. Jessica Bennett from Avine, the lovely wine shop-cocktail bar-restaurant downtown, is mixing up an Espresso Martini that will pair perfectly with your banana pudding. Each cocktail serves two. Each kit has two cocktails.

Finally, Charbett Cauthen is heading up the effort to secure \$100 gift certificates for our very profitable raffle. We will offer at least one drawing of 12 \$100 gift cards. If we have enough, we’ll divide the gift cards into two drawings.

When we first shifted to this fundraising format during the pandemic, pivoting from an in-person gala to a pick-up picnic, we were pleasantly surprised to realize how profitable it is. But we are party people, and we missed having guests. So, this year, Kathy G. wants to invite our guests to pick up their picnics and come back to “eat in the streets.” That would be 29th Street specifically where we will have tables and

chairs set up near the band.

“We’re looking forward to Champagne & Fried Chicken 2022 being even better,” she says, “by taking it to the streets!” The picnic area and band will be on 29th Street from Red Cat to Lumbar, which lends itself to a perfect setting to encourage guests to stay and enjoy dinner on site.”

All members are encouraged to participate in this event since it is our largest and only really big fundraiser each year, and its success is essential to our grant and scholarship giving. There are many ways to help. Kathy G. will assign people to teams; if you know what you want to do, you can request your team placement. Jobs range from stuffing bags ahead of Oct. 2 to greeting customers to handing out picnic bags, wine and cocktails, and flowers.

“We’ll also be operating in a new location—Ferguson warehouse across the street,” Kathy G. says, “so we’ll need plenty of Dames ‘hands on deck’ to help.”

As we did last year, we plan to welcome our new members with a glass of bubbly at the end of the event. Kathy G. says she hopes everyone will stay until the end (or come back if their shift is earlier that week or that day). It’s a fantastic opportunity for fellowship and to welcome our new members in style and to show them what happens when we all work together toward a shared goal.

Les Dames Market Takeover Returns to Pepper Place

by Leigh Sloss-Corra

For the sixth consecutive year, the Market at Pepper Place is teaming up with the Birmingham chapter of LDEI in September to celebrate Women in Food in Birmingham.

During the Les Dames Market Takeover, the Market devotes the entire month to promoting female chefs and food makers, culinary instructors, and cookbook authors who are LDEI members.

The month-long celebration is an opportunity for member Dames to build community awareness of LDEI’s mission of philanthropy and sell tickets to the upcoming annual fundraiser in October.

Each week, a different theme will highlight different culinary specialties. Dames will host the chef demo at 9 a.m. each Saturday, and throughout the morning, other chapter members will staff a bake sale tent filled with goodies related to that week’s theme. The Market will promote the month-long event in its weekly newsletter and on social media to its audience of 100,000 followers.

This year’s Les Dames Market Takeover will run Sept. 3-24. This year’s themes are:

- 9/3: Tailgating Week, spotlighting Dames known for BBQ, tailgate dishes and catering; chef demo by Dame Laura Zapalowski of Homewood Gourmet
- 9/10: Sweet Treats Week, spotlighting Dames who are pastry chefs and bakers and those who could be; chef demo by Dame Kristal Bryant of K & J’s Elegant Pastries



Each September, Birmingham Dames take over the Market at Pepper Place. A different Dame hosts the chef demo each week, while other members staff a bake sale tent.



- 9/17: Latin Food Week, spotlighting Dames who specialize in Latin cuisine, also honoring Hispanic Heritage Month; chef demo presented by Mi Pueblo and Dame Dulce Rivera
- 9/24: Global Flavors Week, spotlighting Dames with world cuisine roots and specialties – Italian, Greek, Israeli, Lebanese, Mexican and Venezuelan; chef demo by Fanoula Gulas of The Greek Kouzina

An updated list of Dames being featured each week will be available in the Market’s newsletter and on social media: @marketatpepperplace and @ldeibirmingham.

Fans and members are encouraged to join the fun and post on your own social media channels, using the hashtags #howwefundthefuture and #localisbetter. It’s Women in Food Month at the Market. Spread the word! We’ll see you there!

Welcoming the World to Birmingham

Birmingham Dames showed up and showed out when the world came to the Magic City.

Several of our members participated in The World Games 2022 as vendors and volunteers. Some shared their food and catering expertise; others offered tips on where to eat and drink locally. One brought her delicious foods to the Merchant Market. And some Dames worked as volunteers, with friendly faces and feet on the ground to help make the Games run smoothly.

Here are some of the Dames who participated:

- **Crystal Peterson** of Yo’ Mama’s Restaurant catered for the European Olympic Committee at City Hall with an impressive spread that included meaty, cheesy spaghetti with salad and bread; fried catfish, jambalaya and hushpuppies; as well as sandwiches such as chicken salad croissants, ham and cheese croissants, and honey turkey and cheese croissants with chips and fresh fruit.
- **Roz Bloomston** worked as a volunteer host during the gymnastics competition at Legacy Arena. She was a perfect ambassador for our city. The highlight of her volunteer time? “The excitement of seeing the Israeli little girl get the gold for the ball gymnastics!”
- **Sonthe Burge** and **Susan Swagler** volunteered at the VIP area for gymnastics and trampoline. They mostly worked at the front table, greeting guests and checking credentials and joking with the Germans about American beer. They say they loved sharing a smile and some Southern hospitality with our visitors. Sonthe says, “I was very impressed with the enormous teams of volunteers present during



Susan Swagler and Sonthe Burge served as volunteers at the VIP area for gymnastics and trampoline during the World Games in Birmingham.

The World Games. I met individuals from Fairhope, Huntsville, and Montgomery who came to Birmingham to serve as volunteers. It was fun to be a part of something so big and meet people from all over the world.” Susan also wrote several food and drink guides to our city including an extensive piece for The Birmingham Times with scores of restaurants sorted by cuisine and proximity to TWG venues. “The best part,” she says, “was being able to include a bit of history and context about the restaurants and restaurant owners so our visitors could get a sense of who we are as a food community along with some solid recommendations of where to eat.” She also wrote a guide on Alabama NewsCenter to the vendors at each of The World Games venues as well as a guide to

some of our popular local breweries, especially those with food.

- **Jan Walsh** and Birmingham-Restaurants.com celebrated 15 years in business and launched Birmingham Restaurants App the week prior to The World Games. Jan says she was “thrilled to have WVTM 13 do a full television news segment and internet story on the app, sharing how The World Games visitors could easily use it to find restaurants.” The app, she says, easily narrows choices for visitors, giving them a quick snapshot of what our city has to offer.
- **Sara Walker** and the staff from Tre Luna Catering were all over the place. They served the VIP crowd who came to John Carroll High School for the flying disc competition. They were at UAB fields one day, and they catered for the Inter-

national Sports Broadcasting teams at Sloss Furnaces National Historic Landmark and at Avondale Park. Sara says, “We are so happy to be a part of it! We served a lot of our favorites like the grilled lemon-rosemary chicken, slow-roasted beef brisket and pork tenderloin. The white chocolate bread pudding was raved about by people from out of the country, too. (Special requests for it.)” A gentleman from Spain named Gustavo who was in charge of the ISB teams took the time to write to her and share some praise from the ISB crew managers at Sloss, “... Tre Luna hot meals are by far the BEST and Sara is great to work with. They were on time and delicious.”

- **Kay Reed** of IZ Weddings and Events set up at the UAB fields and contributed elsewhere, too. “We catered TWG from July 9-16,” Kay says. “Most days it was both lunch and dinner. The menus varied.

Lunches were an assortment of summer salads—caprese, watermelon arugula, mixed greens with peaches and goat cheese, couscous with summer vegetables. We also served our chicken salad, pimiento cheese, grilled chicken with red pepper aioli, and turkey and Swiss sandwiches. One day the meal was meatball sliders, caprese salad and grilled vegetable ciabatta with mascarpone avocado spread. The most popular dinner was Huli Huli chicken with grilled pineapple, green salad with poppyseed dressing, traditional macaroni salad, lemon bars and coconut cake. This event was one of the most organized that I have been involved in. July is typically one of our slower months for catering, so this really boosted our sales!”

- **Kathy G. Mezrano** of Kathy G & Co. had her team catering lunch and dinner for the EOC and volunteers for several days. They served quiche,

breakfast casseroles, yogurt parfaits, fruit and sandwiches ... “all easy to pick up and go,” she says. They also catered an opening event for the City of Hoover and a closing event for Alabama Power at the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame. Jason Mezrano says the menu at this fancy function included Southern specialties and other favorites such as an upscale pasta bar; grazing table with marinated olives, cheese, cured meats, hummus, bruschetta, crostini, and grilled vegetables with balsamic glaze. There was a mini-plates station with herbed grilled beef tenderloin over caramelized onion mashed potatoes, asparagus and veal demi sauce.

- **April McClung** shared a real Southern treat with our guests from around the world. She had her Emily’s Heirloom Pound Cakes at

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Left: Kristal Bryant of K&J’s Elegant Pastries and Creamery made the multi-tiered cake for the closing ceremony for Birmingham Coca-Cola United. Above: Kristal’s World Game-themed cupcakes were a huge hit with visitors to her Uptown store.

the Merchant's Market and at the market at the Civil Rights District Marketplace at Kelly Ingram Park. Hers is a Certified SBA Woman-Owned Small Business, and she says, "Small businesses prepare for years to get an opportunity like this. I am elated to introduce our family heirloom to the world. This is a really special time for us as we are celebrating eight years in business this month!"

• **Kristal Bryant**, whose K&J's Elegant Pastries and Creamery is located in Uptown, was open from 10 a.m.-10 p.m. for 10 straight days and with TWG Plaza just steps away, the world came to her. She made delightful World Games-themed cupcakes for her visitors, and those were a huge hit. She says, "We had the pleasure of making the Closing Ceremony cake for Birmingham Coca-Cola United." The multi-tiered custom cake with Coke cans on top was splashed all over Instagram. "I do my best work," Kristal says, "when they let me customize it. That's what we're in the business of doing—being creative."

• **Aimee Castro** and her team from Sol y Luna catered the VIP hospitality area at Avondale Park where the archery competition was held, and they really got into the spirit of it. "The duck empanadas and cilantro mint chicken skewers always hit the bulls' eye," they posted on Instagram. Aimee says, "It was fascinating to watch the event and be so close to the athletes and medalists from around the world. We are grateful for the opportunity and experience this gave us."



Above: Roz Bloomston volunteered during the gymnastics competition at Legacy Arena. Left and below: Crystal Peterson of Yo' Mama's Restaurant catered for the European Olympic Committee at City Hall with an impressive spread.



Partnering with the Community Food Bank

by Susan Swagler

Our partnership with the Community Food Bank of Central Alabama takes a couple of forms—from monthly volunteer days in the warehouse to helping the organization with its big gala, which also was held in the warehouse. This work is a way to directly make an impact in our community, helping to feed thousands of hungry families in our area.

We worked alongside the Food Bank staff last year to help produce the organization's inaugural Feast for Hope Gala. Nicole Williams, Interim Executive Director for the Food Bank, says "Thanks to the very generous community that came together for the Inaugural Feast for Hope Gala, we are able to provide over 600,000 meals to neighbors facing hunger here in central Alabama.

"Last year we began an amazing partnership for the Inaugural Feast for Hope Gala to raise the much-needed funds to feed our neighbors in need," Williams says. "The extraordinary members of the Birmingham Chapter of Les Dames d'Escoffier International lent their vast experience to help offer a fantastic culinary journey to our guests. The creative and thoughtful menu was tremendous, and the evening is still top of mind today. We are eager to plan an equally beautiful and meaningful evening for 2023."

Check out www.feedingal.org/feast-for-hope-gala/ to take a look at the video and photos from Feast for Hope 2022. The event with its 300 guests featured foods prepared by Dames as well as a video that highlighted our volunteer efforts with the Food Bank. It was a win-win, as our



Mark your calendars: LDEI Birmingham will be partnering with the Community Food Bank of Central Alabama for the second annual Feast for Hope gala on Saturday, March 4, 2023 at the warehouse.

missions are nicely aligned and our donor profiles are similar. This year, we plan to help again with the next Feast for Hope Gala.

"We are thrilled the second annual Feast for Hope Gala will take place on Saturday, March 4, 2023 at the Community Food Bank of Central Alabama," Williams says. "We are so excited to have a unique culinary experience in our transformed warehouse featuring creative cuisine from members of the extraordinary Birmingham chapter of Les Dames d'Escoffier International."

Look for volunteer details in the coming months.

And in the meantime, know that our monthly volunteer efforts continue. We meet at the Food Bank on the third Wednesday of every month from 1-3 p.m. where we mostly pack

boxes of non-perishable foods for food-insecure families in central Alabama. It's a great way to bond and get to know each other better, all while making a real difference. We routinely pack more than 300 boxes, and each of those boxes feeds a family of four.

In July, the Food Bank reported that 1,639 volunteers worked 4,909 hours to distribute more than 1.3 million pounds of food that provided 1,126,074 meals.

Williams says: "We increased our number of volunteers by over 300 from last July! We are so grateful for all the corporate groups, kids, and individuals who have spent their time and energy serving with us this summer and making an impact on our neighbors facing food insecurity."

We are proudly part of that.

Looking Forward: LDEI Bham’s Annual Meeting

by Jan Walsh

Given I was going to write this article about LDEI Birmingham’s annual meeting (held August 14 at Birmingham Botanical Gardens), I took notes. Whoa! Even I cannot write fast enough to jot down all this chapter has accomplished over the past year under the leadership of Outgoing President Kathy G. Mezarno, much less plans for the upcoming year. As they say, “you had to be there.” And many of us were.

Kathy shared highlights of the past two years, starting with the chapter’s adaption to Covid-19 restrictions by successfully revamping our fundraiser. Other high points included the addition of a Latina scholarship recipient, our partnership with the Community Food Bank of Central Alabama, our new WellHouse outreach program, our Pepper Place takeover and our Pepper Place sweet treats fundraiser.

New board members were accepted with a unanimous vote: President: Leigh Sloss Corra, Treasurer: Mary Grace Viado, VP Membership: LaCrista Hutchinson, and Secretary: Andrea Kirkland. Each of these leaders brings her own skill set and experience to her new role.

Leigh is the executive director of the Market at Pepper Place, the

largest producers-only farmers’ market in Alabama. Mary Grace is a CIA-educated chef and corporate executive chef for all Village Tavern restaurants. LaCrista Hutchinson is a regional manager with US Foods. And Andrea is the owner and founder of Culinary Med. Ed., an online continuing education service.

We heard reports from officers and committees including The Board and Membership Committee recommending 12 women as new members. All were voted in by the membership. Welcome to our new members: Alexandra Stone Flowers, Amy Wright Jason, Bronnie Cox, Carolyn Williams, Christina Saab, Dulce Rivera, Emily Roy, Emily Tuttle Shell, Lindsay Whiteaker, Lindsey Noto, Melissa Gray and Tina Liollo.

Everyone at the meeting was excited about the upcoming fundraiser, Champagne & Fried Chicken, which will be a picnic in the street on Oct. 2. For a donation of \$175, supporters will receive a picnic dinner for two. There were sign-up sheets for each person to sign up for a committee for the event.

This year our staging area will be in the Ferguson warehouse, which will give us more space. The target number of baskets to sell is 300 with food packaged in

LDEI-branded tote bags. Kathy G. is the Champagne & Fried Chicken chairperson again this year. Food chairs are Kay Reed and Sara Walker. Other committees and their chairs include logistics: Erin Isbell, Erin Mooney, and Rebecca Gann; bag prep: Sonthe Burge; flowers: Deborah Stone and Charbett Cauthen; check-in: Susan Swagler; champagne: Alexis Douglas, Idie Hastings, and Eileen Hallmark; dinner auction: Charbett Cauthen; sponsors: Martha Johnston and Idie Hastings; PR/marketing: Donna Cornelius, Audrey Pannell, and Christiana Roussel; signage: Rachel West; cocktail kits: Laura Newman and Jess Bennett; and swag: Melany Robinson. Every member will be assigned a job at the event. Several members gave a shout out for help with their roles.

Kay asked us to sign up to help package our food on the morning of the fundraiser because most of those who contribute food will not be pre-packaging it this year.

Martha requested assistance to enlist sponsors because we currently have several new sponsors, but are not at our goal yet.

And Laura Newman asked us to help promote the sale of cocktail kits. So, let’s all pitch in and do our part!

A Round-Up of LDEI-Birmingham’s Programs



Top left: Dame Deborah Stone welcomed members to her Stone Hollow Farmstead at Pepper Place with homemade margaritas, flowers, spreads, and jams. Top right: The group gathered at the Farmstead event, including new members (check out Alex Stone Flowers with her precious baby!) and guests who might one day be members of our chapter. We’re using these fun programs to get to know people.

At right: Dames Gia McCollister and Leigh Sloss-Corra get to know Kathy D’Agostino, the owner of Chocolatá. She brought evil eye-shaped chocolates to the party. Below left: A group of Dames braved torrential rains to visit Earthborn Pottery in Leeds. It was so worth the effort—an informative tour; tasty bites and wine; and, of course, a great opportunity to gather together. Below right: Tena Payne, owner of Earthborn Pottery, shared the story of her business with the group. The huge mold she’s holding aloft was once a light fixture.



Dames Share Their Expertise at WellHouse

by Jessica Bennett

Dames Sonthe Burge, Rosemary Dallam, and Patricia Terry have embarked on a culinary journey in support of The WellHouse, a haven for victims of human trafficking. The mission of The WellHouse is simple: restore these women, a mission to which the chapter contributes through bolstering the relationship with food and nutrition. The Dames offer a monthly cooking class designed to establish basic skills and supply students with recipes.

The June class centered on meal prep and batch cooking, during which students acquired basic knife skills and cooking methods under the instruction of Sonthe and Pat. Students learned Mediterranean recipes with a focus on seasonal vegetables and nutrition, including Greek-style chicken with tzatziki, sauteed squash and zucchini, and oregano rice. The Amygdalota, Greek almond cookies, were a big hit for dessert. Each recipe was recorded in the WellHouse Cookbook and resource guide as well as included in a recipe packet for the individual participants.

The July class was Pie Day, featuring a fresh veggie pizza, fruit salad, and frozen peanut butter pie. Rosemary and Sonthe taught the class using fresh herbs as well as green and red peppers from The WellHouse's own garden, encouraging the students to experiment with different toppings and herbs. The Pie Day menu was selected to encourage collaboration, with participants chopping, measuring, and combining as a group.



Above: In July, the class focused on both sweet and savory pies, including fresh vegetable pizzas. Left: Pat Terry and Sonthe Burge are heading up LDEI's cooking classes for The WellHouse.

Future classes are planned around a similar format, lasting about an hour and offering three relatively simple recipes. Many of the students are beginners, some with no cooking experience at all, and the course recipes are chosen to be easy, healthy, delicious, and fun. The cooking classes are planned to continue serving these women each month.

How You Can Help:

The WellHouse kitchen is in need of the following equipment:

- Dry measuring cups and spoons
- 1-cup and 1-quart Pyrex measuring cups
- A set of nesting mixing bowls
- Cutting boards (pack of colors) for learning food safety
- 3 chef knives
- 4 paring knives
- Microplane
- Instant-read thermometer

Leigh Sloss-Corra Receives LDEI Grant

Dame Leigh Sloss-Corra is the recipient of one of this year's four Les Dames d'Escoffier International's Woman of Purpose Growth Grants, presented by YETI. Leigh will use the \$2,500 grant to provide matching incentives for seniors using food stamps, or SNAP, at the Market at Pepper Place, where she is executive director.

LDEI and YETI opened grant applications to LDEI/YETI

Woman of Purpose Award 2021 nominees, to allow recipients to continue the philanthropic and impactful community work for which they had been recognized. Based on a 2021 report from Alabama Possible, Alabama is the seventh poorest state in the United States, with 10.4% of



adults over age 65 living below the poverty level.

People who are food insecure are at the highest risk for health concerns such as diabetes, heart disease, obesity, and depression. SNAP programs have proven to improve health and nutrition outcomes for communities, but matching incentives are critical to their success.

The LDEI/YETI Growth Grants will be awarded in November.

A Follow-up with an LDEI-Bham Scholarship Winner

by Rachel West

At eMeals, I oversee the culinary nutrition internship program, which gives students a chance to experience the work that we do to create the content in this meal planning app. We release more than 100 new recipes each week across our 15 different meal styles, nine of which are health-focused.

Our interns are often dietetic interns from Samford University or the University of Alabama-Birmingham. They spend anywhere from three to four weeks with us per rotation, and some come back for a longer specialty rotation. Their experiences with us include recipe writing and editing, recipe development across a range of our health-focused plans, learning how to nutritionally analyze recipes, and learning about food photography and styling.

The eMeals rotation is considered an atypical one because the work we do in this area of nutrition is not part of the standard careers dietetics students learn about during their undergraduate

coursework. I adore introducing them to this more creative side of the science of nutrition that allows us to reach a wider audience.

This year, we had the opportunity to host Ashlyn Dallas, one of LDEI Birmingham's 2020 scholarship recipients.

Since Ashlyn completed her rotation with eMeals in November 2021, she has completed her dietetic internship and earned her graduate degree. She's now ready to take her registration exam to become a registered dietitian.

I followed up with her recently to find out what's next for her. Here's what she had to say:

"I graduated from UAB on August 12th, and I am now back home in Auburn, Alabama. I am really enjoying my time here but won't stay for too much longer! I am getting married in October and will move to Atlanta to be with my husband. After getting married and moving,



I hope to take a month or two to study full time for the RD exam.

"Beyond studying for the exam, I look forward to taking advantage of all the benefits of living in a big city—unique job opportunities being at the top of my list!

"My favorite internship rotations were those in which I was encouraged to be creative in the application of my nutrition knowledge. Creativity doesn't always come naturally for me, but it sure does stretch me in the best way! I hope to get a job in nutrition writing, recipe development, or nutrition media to continue interweaving science and art through creative means.

"I am so blessed to have had the experience at UAB that I did, and I am so hopeful for the future of nutrition!"

...

Getting to know Ashlyn during her rotation was a joy. She is bright, creative, a hard worker, and a true delight to be around. She will be an amazing dietitian, and the nutrition profession is lucky to have her.

Behind the Scenes: Jan Walsh

When it comes to restaurant info, this Dame has the ‘write’ stuff

by Donna Cornelius

Not so long ago, folks in search of food news had relatively few options—word of mouth from trusted friends or print articles and reviews by critics like Ruth Reichl and Jonathan Gold. But these days, we’re accustomed to finding the info we need via the internet.

Locally, no one provides that kind of service like our own Dame Jan Walsh. Here’s how she launched a pioneering career and, just recently, a new app that enhances her already successful website, BirminghamRestaurants.com.

How did you get into writing? Was a career in writing always on your radar?

As a child I always wanted to write a book—but I also wanted to be a lawyer. As my love of language grew through the years, I got as close, as possible, to writing, becoming an English and writing teacher (in my hometown) at Oneonta City Schools. Here, my students and I developed a literary magazine, *Expressions*, publishing their writing and art. And I wrote, and was awarded, many grants to fund its publication. Annually each year’s magazine won Columbia Scholastic Press Association’s Gold Awards. In 1997, we won its highest honor, a Crown Award, which I received at Columbia University, as *Expressions* was the only middle school magazine to ever win this award. I also enjoyed serving on CSPAs Board of Judges during my tenure as a teacher.



You also write about wine—how did that interest start?

After moving to Liberty Park, I took the role as editorial manager at a Mountain Brook-based software company. After this stint, I finally started my own writing career, which began with a wine column and wine events calendar in a local magazine in 2005. And when the Court of Master Sommeliers asked me to organize a Birmingham group to take the first level course and test (back when there were only three levels), they also surprised me with a comped seat for it. Thankfully, I along with most of the group passed and were pinned. Wine led to food, and I soon had both local wine and food columns and was contributing to other print publications nationally, and one international magazine, *Wine Spectator*, with cover and feature stories about wine collectors and their wine cellars and private wine caves.

How did you get the idea for your first website, BirminghamWine.com?

I found it difficult to get events from wine shops and restaurants in time to meet print deadlines for my wine calendar. Thus, I suggested the magazine take the events online instead. But I got a head shaking, “no” response and was told they did not “like” the internet and that it was a fad! Yet they were generous to offer me the option to do it myself and syndicate my wine column there. I did and do like the internet, so I took them up on it, publishing BirminghamWine.com in 2006.

How did BirminghamRestaurants.com come about?

I soon realized that a Birmingham Restaurants website was also needed, to publish food events, menus, specials, etc. So once again, I approached the magazine, and they were not interested in it either. But they offered to syndicate my food columns there.

I searched for online city restaurants website models to get ideas, but I honestly did not like any of the restaurant directory models—and thought we could do better. Drawing from my previous experience at the software company, where I sat in development meetings with designers and programmers drawing ideas and interrelationships of functionalities on the walls on big white sheets of paper, I saw the connection of the frontend user to the backend programming and came to the realization that (pretty much) anything you can dream up, you can develop if you have the money—a BIG if.

And for Birmingham Restaurants website to be what I wanted it to be: profile based with multiple pages for overview, menus, map, food photography, chef bios, cooking demos, and more, it was going to be expensive, requiring Dot Net Nuke technologies.

What were the early days of your business like?

After buying the domain name in an after-market, I developed a list of Birmingham’s best restaurants. And I shared my idea with these chefs/ restaurateurs, along with a plan for it to be in the green by launch.

On March 1, 2007, I launched BirminghamRestaurants.com, becoming an unintentional pioneer back in the early (www) wild, wild, web days. For context, at the time, Twitter was less than a year old. And Facebook had become a public site less than six months prior.

I am forever grateful to Giani Re-spinto, George Reis, and Frank Stitt, whose restaurants were among the first founding members, which led others to follow, and whose restaurants have remained members as we celebrate our 15th anniversary.

Tell us about your other ventures.

From the Birmingham Restaurants model, I became a funded entrepreneur, developing the model in medical with BirminghamDoctors.com, for which I was honored to be named Healthcare Innovator of the Year in 2009 by the *Birmingham Business Journal*. I left this site in the hands of investors after two years of consulting for them. In 2011 I developed five legal Alabama websites, one statewide and four metro city websites in Birmingham, Huntsville, Mobile and Montgomery on the original model for my legal business model, Local Lawyers.

“On March 1, 2007, I launched BirminghamRestaurants.com, becoming an unintentional pioneer in the early (www) wild, wild, web days. For context, at the time, Twitter was less than a year old. And Facebook had become a public site less than six months prior.”

—Jan Walsh

What’s been the hardest thing about what you do?

The doctors and lawyers’ sites were the most difficult work I have ever done. Entering new industries with investors and strategic partners was far more difficult than I ever imagined. Yet all the websites remain successful today and continue to serve very meaningful purposes.

And the most fun thing?

There is nothing more fun than a new product launch. Nothing! Tech changes daily, and the needs of my restaurants and my food audience evolve over time, requiring additional investments of money and time. Filling the latest need is Birmingham Restaurants App—the most popular product I have ever launched! Foodies are wild about it, downloading it at the App Store and on Google Play. And although the number of restaurants we accept is limited, they are lining up to get on the app. Here everyone can access all the site has to offer at their fingertips, plus announcements pushed to their phones. So, they do not have to check out the website to see what new restau-

rants, events, menus, reviews and cooking demos are published because we push them out to their phones and tablets. I’m also excited to announce that in September, I’ll be launching AuburnRestaurants.com and Auburn Restaurants App.

What’s a development that excites you about Birmingham’s food scene?

Birmingham Restaurants’ newest member, Tasting TBL, is the ultimate supper club of Chef Tyler Lyne and his wife, Jennifer, who moved here from NYC. In addition to literally buying a 200-acre farm to raise cattle, they are also developing two restaurants, authentic French and a steakhouse like none other, both of which will be on the site and the app. These restaurants and their cuisines are going to take Birmingham to a new level as a food destination—and up the ante for Birmingham Restaurants. I can’t wait to nominate Jennifer to Les Dames next year because onboarding the best new members has become my favorite role within the group.

Gridiron Goodies: Dames Share Their Most Cheer-Worthy Tailgate Recipes

by Donna Cornelius

It's fall in the South, which means the air is filled with cries of "Roll Tide," "War Eagle," and "Who the heck ate all the pigs in a blanket?" It's the time when our hearts turn to college football – and our taste buds turn to the tastiest tailgate food.

Tailgating was also the theme of the kickoff of Women in Food Month and the Les Dames Market Takeover at the Market at Pepper Place in September. Dame Leigh Sloss-Corra is hoping to enlist as many of us as possible to attend the Market each Saturday.

To make your own pre-game parties a cut above a bucket of fried chicken (not that there's anything wrong with that), try these recipes that are Dame-tested and fan-approved.

Laura Zapalowski's husband is a New Orleans native, and she used to live there, too, so they make their own andouille sausage for gumbo and this yummy dip.

Cheddar-Andouille Sausage Dip

Makes 8 to 10 appetizer servings

- ½ pound diced (or ground) andouille sausage
- 1 cup diced ripe tomatoes
- 1 jalapeño or Serrano pepper, stem and seeds removed and diced
- 2 (8-ounce) packages cream cheese, softened
- ¾ cup (about 3 ounces) shredded sharp Cheddar cheese
- Chopped green onions, for garnish
- Corn chips, for serving



- Cook sausage in a large skillet, stirring until meat is lightly browned. Transfer to a paper towel-lined plate and drain well.
- Return cooked sausage to the skillet and stir in tomatoes, pepper and cream cheese. Cook over low heat for 2 to 3 minutes.
- Spoon sausage mixture into a lightly greased 1-quart baking dish and sprinkle with cheddar cheese. Bake at 350°F for 20 to 25 minutes or until bubbly. Garnish with chopped green onions and serve with corn chips.

These treats from **Pam Lolley** means your tailgate will end on a sweet note (even if, God forbid, the game doesn't).

Football Brownies

Makes 14 servings

- 1 (4-ounce) package unsweetened baking chocolate bar (such as Baker's), chopped
- 2 cups granulated sugar
- 1 cup (8 ounces) salted butter, softened
- 4 large eggs
- 1 cup (about 4¼ ounces) all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 2 cups semisweet chocolate chips, divided
- ¼ cup heavy whipping cream
- ½ cup creamy vanilla frosting (such as Duncan Hines Creamy Vanilla Frosting)

- Preheat oven to 350°F. Spray a 13- x 9-inch baking pan with cooking spray and line with parchment paper, allowing 4 inches overhang. Microwave chopped chocolate in a medium microwaveable bowl at MEDIUM (50% power) 1½ to 2 minutes, stirring at 30-second intervals until melted and smooth. Set aside to cool slightly, about 10 minutes.
- Beat sugar and butter with an electric mixer at medium speed in a large bowl until light and fluffy, about 1 minute, scraping down sides and bottom of bowl occasionally. Add eggs, 1 at a time, beating just until blended after each addition. Add melted chocolate and beat until blended. Add flour and beat at low speed just until blended. Scrape down sides and bottom of bowl and stir in vanilla and 1 cup of the chocolate chips. Spread batter into prepared baking pan. Bake in preheated oven until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out with a few crumbs, 35 to 40 minutes. Cool completely on a wire rack, about 2 hours.
- Remove brownies from pan using parchment paper overhang as a handle. Cut out football shapes using a 3-inch oval cookie cutter.
- Microwave heavy cream and remaining 1 cup chocolate chips in a 1-quart microwaveable bowl at MEDIUM (50%) power for 1½ to 2 minutes, whisking at 30-second intervals until melted and smooth. Dip tops of brownie footballs into melted chocolate mixture, allowing excess chocolate to drip off brownie. Transfer to a parchment-lined baking sheet; chill footballs 30 minutes.
- Place vanilla frosting into a piping bag fitted with a small round tip or into a zip-top plastic bag with a small hole cut from one corner. Pipe lines and laces onto brownies to resemble footballs.

Football Cake

Makes 12 servings

- For the cake:
- 1 ounce unsweetened chocolate baking bar, chopped
 - ¼ cup (2 ounces) salted butter, softened
 - 1 cup granulated sugar
 - 1 large egg
 - 1 ¼ cups (about 4¾ ounces) cake flour, bleached (such as Swans Down), sifted
 - ½ teaspoon baking soda
 - ½ teaspoon kosher salt
 - ¼ teaspoon baking powder
 - ¾ cup whole buttermilk
 - 2 teaspoons vanilla extract

- For the chocolate buttercream:
- 1 ounce unsweetened chocolate baking bar, chopped
 - 1 ounce semisweet chocolate bar, chopped
 - ½ cup (4 ounces) salted butter, softened
 - 2 cups powdered sugar, sifted
 - 2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa
 - 2 tablespoons whole milk
 - 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
 - ½ cup creamy vanilla frosting (such as Duncan Hines Creamy Vanilla Frosting)

- Prepare the cake: Preheat oven to 350°F. Microwave chocolate in a small microwaveable bowl at MEDIUM (50%) power for 1½ to 2 minutes, stirring at 30-second intervals until melted and smooth. Set aside to cool slightly, about 10 minutes.
- Beat butter with an electric mixer at medium speed until creamy; gradually add sugar, and beat until light and fluffy, about 2 minutes, scraping down sides and bottom of bowl occasionally. Add egg and beat until just combined. Add melted chocolate and beat until combined.

- Whisk together flour, baking soda, salt and baking powder in a medium bowl; add to chocolate mixture alternately with buttermilk, beginning and ending with flour mixture. Mix at low speed after each addition until just blended. Stir in vanilla.
- Pour batter into one coated (with baking spray) 9-inch round cake-pan. Bake in a preheated oven until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean, 30 to 35 minutes. Cool in pan on wire rack for 10 minutes; invert cake onto a wire rack, and remove from pan. Cool completely, about 1 hour.
- Prepare the buttercream: Microwave chopped unsweetened chocolate and chopped semisweet chocolate in a small microwaveable bowl at MEDIUM (50% power) for 1½ to 2 minutes, stirring at 30-second intervals until melted and smooth. Cool for 10 minutes.
- Beat butter with an electric mixer at medium speed in a medium bowl until creamy. Add melted chocolate; beat until blended. Add powdered sugar, cocoa, milk, and vanilla; beat on high speed until smooth and creamy, about 1 minute, scraping down bottom and sides of bowl occasionally.
- To assemble cake, cut a 2-inch-wide strip from center of cake using a serrated knife; remove strip; set aside. Push the 2 sides of cake together to form a football shape.
- Frost top and sides of football cake with chocolate buttercream. Place vanilla frosting in a piping bag fitted with a small round tip or into a zip-top plastic bag with a small hole cut in the corner, and pipe lines and laces on the cake. Cut reserved strip of cake into 4 equal pieces and frost tops with remaining buttercream.

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Pat Terry adds a little global flair to the party with this tasty and easy recipe.

Kimchi-Sesame Hummus

Serves 8 (serving size: about ¼ cup)

- 1 (15-ounce) can unsalted chickpeas
- ½ cup refrigerated kimchi
- ¼ cup tahini
- 3 tablespoons water
- 2 tablespoons toasted sesame oil
- 1 tablespoon rice or apple cider vinegar
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 chopped garlic clove
- Extra virgin olive oil for topping
- 1½ tablespoons sliced green onions
- Sliced cucumbers, carrots, bell peppers, etc. and/or whole-grain crackers

• Drain unsalted chickpeas. Add drained chickpeas, kimchi, tahini, water, toasted sesame oil, rice vinegar, kosher salt and chopped garlic clove in a food processor; process until well blended (about 2 minutes). Spoon hummus into a bowl; top with drizzled olive oil and sliced green onions. Serve with vegetables and/or crackers.

Donna Cornelius says no University of Alabama tailgate is complete without Yellowhammers—and it’s much less stressful to make them at home than to join the youthful crowd at Gallette’s, the Tuscaloosa bar where they originated.



Yellowhammers

Makes about 8 servings

- ½ cup vodka
- ½ cup light rum
- ½ cup amaretto
- 1/3 cup water
- 2 ½ cups pineapple juice
- 1 ½ cups orange juice
- Maraschino cherries

• Stir together the vodka, rum, amaretto, water, pineapple juice and orange juice. Taste and add more juice or liquor if you’d like. (If you add more liquor, it’s wise to invite at least one designated driver to the party.) Serve over ice and top each drink with a cherry.

What’s not to like about these bits of smoky goodness from **Rebecca Gann**?

“Pretzel”-Wrapped Pigs in a Blanket

Makes about 40 bites

- 1 package of mini hot dogs (such as Hillshire Farm Lit’l Smokies)
- 3 (8-ct.) packages of crescent rolls (such as Pillsbury)

- 2 eggs
- 1 tablespoon heavy cream
- Maldon sea salt flakes
- Honey mustard, Dijon or sauce for dipping (beer cheese is delicious with these too!)

• Preheat oven to 375°F, and line a baking sheet (or two baking sheets if smaller) with parchment paper. On a clean surface or cutting board, roll out crescent rolls, and cut each triangle in half to create 16 smaller crescent rolls. Individually wrap each mini hot dog in a crescent roll and place on the baking sheet. Using only the egg yolks, whisk the yolks with the heavy cream to create an egg wash. From there, brush the egg wash over each of the assembled pigs in a blanket. Sprinkle with sea salt and bake in the oven for 15-18 minutes until the pigs in a blanket are golden in color and have a nice sheen from the egg wash. Serve with mustards or beer cheese.

Here’s a super-fun idea from **Susan Swagler** that’s sure to be a hit with your tailgate guests. Carnitas, meaning “little meats,” is a dish of Mexican cuisine that originated in the state of Michoacán. Carnitas are made by braising pork shoulder in aromatics like garlic, orange zest, oregano, and peppers until tender.

Carnitas Street Tacos

- Go to Mi Pueblo Supermarket on Green Springs in Homewood (813 Green Springs Highway).
- Pick up some cilantro, jalapeños, red onions and limes in the produce section.
- Pick up some Mexican crema (optional) and some queso fresco or cotija cheese (not optional) from the dairy cases near the pastries.
- Get a basket and gloves from the pastry counter and reward yourself

with a pastry of your choice for being so smart about this tailgate (pay for the pastry at the pastry counter).

- Pick up however many pounds you want of already-cooked(!) carnitas from the far-left corner of the meat counter. (If there is a line—you’ll see it starting in the cheese section—you will need to stand in line like everyone else to get to those carnitas.)
- Get a couple of containers of fresh salsa from the café near the carnitas (pay for it there).
- Pick up a big bag of corn tortillas from the tortilla aisle.
- Pick up a can of marinated carrots and jalapeños from the canned vegetable aisle.
- Reward yourself again on the way out the door with some fruit in a cup from the fresh-fruit stand to the left as you face the front windows. Get your fruit in a cup with every topping they offer.
- Go home and chop up your fresh jalapeños, onions, and cilantro.
- Quarter your limes. Put all these things into separate containers.
- Zest half of one lime and squeeze a little lime juice into the crema if you want to include crema. Put the canned carrots and jalapeños into a container. Shred the carnitas a bit if necessary and mix up the tender and crispy parts.
- Take everything with you to the tailgate and spread it out on a table.
- Instruct people to use two tortillas with each taco and top them however they’d like.

Spice up your tailgate with **Jan Walsh**’s hearty and wholesome main dish.

Organic Chicken Chili

- 2 pounds ground chicken (I use Joyce Farms)
- 1½ cups chopped organic onion
- 1 organic red pepper, chopped
- 2 teaspoons organic garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon organic onion powder
- 1 (15-ounce) can organic kidney beans (I use Goya)
- 1 (15-ounce) can organic black beans (I use Goya)
- 1 (15-ounce) can organic tomato sauce
- 2 tablespoons organic tomato paste
- 2 tablespoons organic unsweetened cocoa powder
- 2 teaspoons organic ground cumin
- 2 teaspoons organic smoked paprika
- 2 teaspoons organic ground coriander
- 1 teaspoon organic dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon organic chili powder
- 1 teaspoon organic pink Himalayan salt
- 2 cups organic chicken broth (I use Pacific)

• Cook the chicken over medium heat until browned and cooked through. Place in slow cooker. Add all ingredients except chicken broth to the chicken. Stir it all together. Stir in chicken broth. Cover and cook in slow cooker on LOW for 8 hours or on HIGH for 4 hours. I like to serve this chili with Organic Valley’s Shredded Organic Mexican Cheese, organic sour cream, and Dayspring Dairy Organic Crackers.

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Leslie Register shares a spread of game day delights that even Paul Finebaum would approve of.

Sheet Pan Beefy Nachos

Servings: Feeds a crowd! 12+

1 tablespoon olive oil
1 pound lean ground beef
1 teaspoon garlic powder
1 teaspoon cumin
1 teaspoon chili powder
¼ cup water
1 (12.5-ounce) bag tortilla chips
4 cups Mexican blend cheese, finely grated, divided
4 Roma tomatoes, seeded and diced
1 bunch green onions, sliced
1 (12-ounce) jar sliced jalapeños
Garnish with cherry tomatoes and cilantro
Serve with salsa, guacamole, and sour cream

- Heat oil in a medium skillet; add ground beef, and cook until brown and thoroughly cooked. With a paper towel, carefully remove any excess grease from the pan. Add garlic powder and next 3 ingredients, and allow to simmer for 5 minutes.
- On an approximate 13- x 17½-inch sheet pan, layer half of the chips, half of the ground beef, and half of the cheese and jalapeños. Repeat with remaining chips, ground beef and cheese for the second layer.
- Bake at 350°F for 6 to 8 minutes. Broil for 1 to 3 minutes until cheese is melted and bubbly, and chips are slightly brown. Top with tomatoes, green onions and remaining jalapeños. Garnish with cherry tomatoes and cilantro, if desired. Serve immediately with salsa, guacamole and sour cream.

Stadium Pups with Everything Relish

Makes 12

½ onion, coarsely chopped
2 cups sauerkraut, drained
¼ cup sweet pickle cubes, plus 2 tablespoons juice
2 tablespoons yellow mustard
2 tablespoons ketchup
1 tablespoon coarse ground mustard
1 (16-ounce) smoked sausage, grilled, such as Conecuh
1 (12- to 15-ounce) package Hawaiian-style rolls

- Combine first 6 ingredients in the bowl of a food processor. Pulse until thoroughly and evenly chopped, stopping 2 to 3 times to scrape sides of the bowl. Refrigerate until ready to use. (This relish can be made up to 2 days in advance.)
- Grill sausage on medium to medium-high heat until thoroughly cooked. Cut grilled sausage into 12 (2- to 3-inch) pieces. There will be a couple extra pieces for tasting or a couple more buns. With a bread knife, cut a slit into the top of each roll, stopping halfway through. Place sausage pieces in slits in rolls, and top with Everything Relish.

Grilled Chicken Wings with White BBQ Dipping Sauce

Makes about 16 wings

1 stick butter
½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
2 tablespoons “milder” hot sauce, such as Frank’s
1 teaspoon salt
3 pounds chicken wings, cut into thirds, tips discarded
Assorted raw vegetables
Green onions, sliced for garnish

- In a small saucepan, melt butter, and whisk in next 3 ingredients.
- Preheat grill to medium-high heat. Place wings on a sheet pan, and brush both sides of the wings with the butter mixture. Grill for 8 to 10 minutes; turn and baste with melted butter, and grill for 6 more minutes or until done. Serve with dipping sauce and assorted raw vegetables. Garnish with green onion slices.

White BBQ Dipping Sauce

Makes 2 cups

1½ cups mayonnaise
¼ cup water
¼ cup white wine vinegar
1 tablespoon ground black pepper
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon sugar
2 garlic cloves, minced
2 teaspoons horseradish

- Combine all ingredients in a medium-size bowl. Store in refrigerator. This can be made ahead. It will keep up to 1 week.

5-Layer Dip

(Who has time for 7 anymore?)
Serves 6 to 8. For a larger crowd, this recipe can easily be doubled.

1 (15.5-ounce) can black beans
Juice of one lime
1 tablespoon cumin
1 (8-ounce) container sour cream
1 (1-ounce) taco seasoning mix packet
1 cup guacamole (your favorite recipe or store-bought)
1 cup pico de gallo
1 cup cheddar cheese
Jalapeño slices and cilantro
Tortilla chips

- Rinse and drain black beans thoroughly, mashing slightly with your fingers or a fork to break up some of the beans, and then place into a small saucepan over medium heat. Add lime juice and cumin; simmer for 5 minutes. Allow to cool while preparing the remaining layers.
- In a small bowl, combine sour cream and taco seasoning packet.
- In a 1-quart dish, layer beans, sour cream mixture, guacamole, pico de gallo, and cheese, in that order. Refrigerate for several hours.
- Before serving, garnish with jalapeño slices and cilantro. Serve with tortilla chips.

Leslie’s Quick Homemade Guac:

Combine 2 mashed avocados, juice of 1 lemon or lime, 2 tablespoons pico de gallo, and 1 tablespoon cilantro.

Whoever Captain Rodney is, he deserves the game ball for coming up with the main ingredient of this creation. **Wesley Lassen** says it’s one of her favorites.

Captain Rodney’s Cheesebake

½ cup mayonnaise
8 ounces cream cheese
2 cups grated Cheddar cheese
2 green onions, chopped
6 butter crackers, crushed
½ cup bacon pieces
½ cup Captain Rodney’s Boucan Glaze (available at The Cook Store)

- Mix mayo, cream cheese, Cheddar cheese, green onions, bacon pieces and ¼ cup of the Boucan Glaze. Top with crushed crackers. Bake at 350°F for 15 minutes. Top with more bacon and drizzle with remaining ¼ cup glaze.

Eileen Hallmark takes the bite out of tailgating stress with these two simple and savory recipes.

Date and Pecan Bites

8 ounces sharp Cheddar cheese, room temperature
½ cup butter, room temperature
1½ cups cake flour
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon or more cayenne pepper
16 ounces pitted dates
40 pecan halves

- Preheat oven to 400°F. Cream together cheese and butter, then add in the flour, cayenne, and salt. Stuff dates with the pecan halves and mold with the dough around them to make a ball. Bake 10-15 minutes.

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before due to our corporate sponsors, basket sales, cocktail kits, and dine around auction package.

We were able to award \$33,000 in grants and scholarships to women furthering their education and supporting female entrepreneurs in food, beverage, and hospitality in our state. We added to our endowment so that it will perpetuate another grant or scholarship as well.

We also expanded our community outreach by volunteering monthly at the Community Food Bank of Central Alabama packing food boxes, which are distributed to over 200 sites in central Alabama. When they asked us to assist with a gala dinner in the warehouse “with chandeliers,” we gathered our catering companies and provided a six-course tasting menu with wine pairings by our sommelier, Alexis Douglas, for the corporate community. In return, the food bank has funded a scholarship in its name. This unique partnership could be a model for other chapters to follow.

Crab Swiss Bites

7½ ounces of crab meat, drained and flaked
1 tablespoon sliced green onions
1 cup Swiss cheese, grated
½ cup mayonnaise (I prefer Duke’s)
1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
¼ teaspoon curry powder
1 package of flaky rolls (Publix potato rolls work well here)
1 (5-ounce) can of sliced water chestnuts

Instructions:

- Combine crab, green onion, Swiss cheese, mayo, lemon juice and curry powder. Separate rolls in half. Spoon crab mixture between halves. Top with water chestnut slices. Bake at 400°F for 10-12 minutes.

We’ve embraced another community outreach project at The Well-House, a home for women who are victims of human trafficking. Our dietitians are providing culinary education to help educate these women about healthy food preparation and choices as they re-enter society. Our annual market takeover at Pepper Place provides the funds needed to support this project.

We’re continuing the September tradition of the Dames taking over the Market with themed menus items for sale and a chef’s spotlight each week of the month. Our 2023 Sweets Treats Valentine sale will provide funds for another scholarship.

Yes, it seems that “Birmingham does everything right!” I’m so grateful for the opportunity to have been your president and look forward to continuing to work with all of you to raise awareness of LDEI Birmingham and support women in the industries of food, beverage, and hospitality in Alabama.

with love and gratitude,
Kathy G

Flavors of Mexico Has Returned!

By Betsy McAtee

After a two-year absence, Flavors of Mexico returned in April! This year's event, hosted by the Mexico chapter of Les Dames d'Escoffier, traveled to Valle de Guadalupe located in the Baja California peninsula.

Hailed as the Napa Valley of Mexico, Valle de Guadalupe has more than 200 wineries producing world-renowned wines, and chefs have relocated to the area, developing a cuisine known as Baja Med. Valle de Guadalupe did not disappoint.

We enjoyed a welcome dinner at Puesto at the Headquarters in San Diego, prepared by Chef Luisteen Gonzalez. Luisteen is a special friend of the LDEI Mexico chapter and has traveled on each of the Flavors of Mexico trips. It was truly an honor to experience the carefully crafted tacos and specialty cocktails curated for our evening by Luisteen and his team.

The next day we traveled by motor coach across the border into Tijuana and into Valle de Guadalupe and Ensenada.

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Our first stop was a tour and tasting of one of the best olive oils in the world. Olibaja produces 90,000 liters of extra virgin olive oil from its 50,000 Mission and Manzanilla olive trees using intensive cultivation methods.

Olibaja Procesadora de Aceituna won a Silver Award at the 2020 NYIOOC World Olive Oil Competition, the world's most prestigious olive oil quality contest. We sampled four varieties of olive oil including the silver award winner!



One of the highlights of the tour at Casa Pedro Domecq was tasting out-of-the-barrel wines that have been aging for 30 years.

After our tour at Olibaja, we enjoyed lunch at Chef Roberto Alcocer's restaurant Malva. Dames enjoyed a memorable lunch with wine pairings.

Accommodations for the Dames attending was the beautiful El Cielo Winery & Resort. Set on 71 acres of rolling Baja California vineyards, El Cielo features elegant suites with sweeping mountain views. It's right in the heart of Valle de Guadalupe.

Dames enjoyed dinner at Fauna, which was announced by Latin America's 50 Best Restaurants as the 2020 winner of the Miele One To Watch Award for being an emerging restaurant in Latin America.

David Castro Hussong is the chef at Fauna, which is located inside Bruma, a resort in the Valle de Guadalupe. If his last name sounds familiar, it's because his family owns the famous Hussong's Cantina in Ensenada, where the margarita is said to have been invented.

Dinner at Fauna was a flavor explosion with courses of fresh local ceviche, abalone, grilled octopus, charred cabbage, and smoked broccoli.

On day 2, we experienced a specially prepared breakfast at Salvia Blanca. Dames dined on fresh baked conchas and mimosas along with enchiladas suizas, chilaquiles, legua en pipian, and steak.

This amazing restaurant was just announced as the best restaurant in Valle de Guadalupe. There were beautiful views of lavender fields to accompany the wonderful food.

After this amazing breakfast, we visited the Kumiai Reserve. Kumiais are Baja California's indigenous people. Although the Kumiai have lived in this area for thousands of years, only a few hundred residents still remain. We had the opportunity to sample their native foods, which use beans and acorns. The Kumiai consider oak trees sacred, as their diet was largely acorns

before they abandoned their nomadic lifestyle and started to grow corn. We enjoyed a Kumiai dance by local children.

Lunch at Finca Altozano was prepared by Chef Javier Plascencia, who is a down-to-earth, charismatic chef continuously in search of unique flavors.

Lunch was prepared on a giant outdoor plancha. We enjoyed courses of blue fin tuna toast, a paella-style dish of rice, ribs, and peas; filet and chocolate mole. Each course was paired with wines from the region.

Afternoon activities saw us making our own wine at Cielo Winery. Later that evening we enjoyed music and dinner under the stars surrounded by the vineyards. We enjoyed a northern Mexico-style tacos feast, featuring tacos de pescado, birria, carne asada, and vegetarian quesadillas.

The next day, breakfast was at Cocina de Doña Esthela, featuring local cuisine that has earned the praise of celebrity chefs, such as Rick Bayless, Gordon Ramsay, and the late Anthony Bourdain.

We enjoyed a private tour and tasting at Domecq Winery. The history of Casa Pedro Domecq Mexico dates to 1730 in Jerez de la Frontera, the heart of Andalusia, Spain. It was that year when Pedro Domecq Lembeque, the founder, began the beautiful mission of producing fine Sherry brandies and wines.

The highlight of the tour was tasting out-of-the-barrel wines that have been aging for 30 years. In the private cellar one Dame was given the task of selecting for the group a sparkling that she was able to saber for the group. It was a very special day.

Our next stop was Vinícola 3



Dame Betsy McAtee (right) was able to attend Flavors of Mexico in Valle de Guadalupe, hosted by the LDEI Mexico chapter.

Mujeres (3 Women Winery). Our group was welcomed by Ivette Vailard, an artist as well as the owner of the winery and a pioneer in bottling wine in Valle de Guadalupe.

Tres Mujeres Winery is one of the most authentic corners of the area. She took us on a tour of an authentic Baja California wine house/winery. During our tour, we were able to appreciate the fruit trees; flowers; grape varieties; her intimate, cozy, and private tasting cellar; her main winery; and beautiful pieces of her art, while she told us her story in the valley with a glass of wine.

At a ranch where Ivette promotes adapting and mimicking the environment, we learned to appreciate how it is possible to develop a project that is consistent and friendly with the area.

We enjoyed a masterful exhibition of beautiful seafood from the Mexican Pacific coast, prepared with no electricity, only by flame. Inside the restaurant at the winery, there was a formidable table of fresh delicacies from the sea and

from Ivette's ranch being served by the chef personally. We were surrounded by pine trees and the splendid sunset in the Valle de Guadalupe, a perfect backdrop.

On our final day we visited Las Nubes Winery

Focused on sustainability, Las Nubes seeks to be a wine company, producer, and distributor of the best-quality wines in the Baja California area. We enjoyed a private tasting of several varieties, including:

- White: Chardonnay, Chenin Blanc, Sauvignon Blanc, Vidal Blanc, and Viognier.
- Reds: Barbera, Malbec, Monastrell (Mourvedre), Petit Verdot, Petite Sirah, Primitivo, Sangiovese, Syrah, Tannat, and Zinfandel.

After our departure from Las Nubes we made our way to the farewell lunch at Adobe Guadalupe Winery in El Porvenir. The owner, Tru Miller, has been making world-class wines here since the late '90s. Her wines have become a benchmark for quality wines from this region.

Additionally, many years ago, the Andalusian stallion was brought from Spain and bred with an American Quarter Horse. Today, Adobe Guadalupe is the largest breeder of Azteca horses in the world and has a stable of 26.

Lunch was prepared by guest chef Luisteen Gonzalez, who also prepared our welcome dinner. We enjoyed passion fruit and mango ceviche, lobster tostada, ensalada de mercado, taco de pulpa, and for our final course, milk chocolate almond praline with coffee crumble and fruit. Amazing!!

We returned to San Diego for our departures home the following day, vowing to return to this majestic region again soon.

From the Farm: Changing of the Seasons



These fall garden plots are a result of months of planning and preparation.

By Margaret Ann Snow

I love watching the seasons change, one fading into the other. Swimsuits and goggles are traded in for backpacks. Students return to college campuses, sounds of football cheers in the air here in Alabama. Farmers’ markets slow down, as does the pace on the farm. Red leaves appear on the trees, followed by the first cool breeze we’ve felt in months. When fall finally arrives, I rejoice in the return of all things green and of root vegetables in my garden, as well as in my kitchen. All of the planning and preparation happens months in advance. We seed in the greenhouse at the end of

July for fall transplanting. Seed flats full of chard, kale, broccoli, cauliflower, fennel, and lettuces germinate in a climate-controlled trailer because they never could in the high outdoor temperatures of summer. Once germinated, we move them into the greenhouse in the field, which has a shade cloth over it during the still hot days of late summer. The shade cloth is an attempt to lower the temperature inside, to balance the sunlight and warmth, ensuring there is not too much and not too little, but just right. Most crops take four to six weeks from seeding to “ready to transplant.” It will likely still be a bit too warm in the field even then, but if

we do not get them growing, an early fall freeze could prevent the crops from reaching maturity. Often the time in the field before fall rains and cooler temperatures arrive requires a healthy dose of irrigation. Arugula appears as early as August and just in time for pairing with figs, watermelons, and the last of the peaches for spectacular salads. Fast growing root vegetables, such as radishes and turnips, are not far behind and ready to be pulled up by late September. Come October we are harvesting chard and kale once again. Winter squash plants have been growing all summer long and the



skin begins to change color, signaling to us that it is time to harvest. Kabocha pumpkins that were recently green are suddenly bright orange and the butternuts lighten, becoming that familiar rich, creamy color. We cure them for a couple of weeks, allowing them to sit and sweeten before transforming them into pumpkin soup, pumpkin bread, or pumpkin pie.

Ginger and turmeric are sprouted as early as April and transplanted soon after. They, too, grow all summer long and are typically harvested beginning in late October, the perfect time for warming spices. Golden Milk tea has become a late fall and winter staple of mine. Samin Nosrat’s Ginger Molasses Cake from her cookbook *Salt Fat Acid Heat* is like a gingerbread cookie in cake form, only much, much tastier. In fall and

*Above: Freshly harvested turnips
At right: The winter squash harvest at Snow’s Bend Farm.*



winter, I put a little ginger in everything, because why not? I also make a rice with turmeric and ginger, along with coconut oil, dried cranberries,

pine nuts, and cilantro. It seems to give me just what I need at the end of a long, cold day, at the end of a busy year (as they all tend to be).

The Azores: A Hidden Hot Spot

by Rachel West

The Azores have been on our travel wish list for years, but we couldn't have fathomed how much we all would be charmed.

This Portuguese archipelago of nine volcanic islands is located in the north Atlantic, about a thousand miles from the mainland. We visited São Miguel, the biggest and most populous of the bunch, in June. The island is still small—about 40 miles long and about 10 miles wide—but it is brimming with things to do, see, and experience. We had high expectations, and São Miguel exceeded every one of them.

The landscape is stunning, filled with rolling hills and volcanic peaks, magnificent cliffs plunging into the ocean, lakes of seemingly every shade of green and blue, lush trees and plants, terraced plots scaling the hillsides filled with vegetable gardens, stone-lined fields of farmland and pasture, and lots and lots of cows. The pace of life is wonderfully, refreshingly slower.

The villages have narrow streets and even narrower (or sometimes non-existent) sidewalks that occasionally required us to fold in our side mirrors to squeeze through when another car was passing us. The front doors of homes often open right onto the street, and we passed by two women who were sitting at their open front windows easily chatting across the street to one another, our car a momentary blip in their conversation.

The temperature on São Miguel is mild—it averages between 57°F and 71°F year-round—and some days the



On the north shore of São Miguel near Ribeira Grande.

high and low temperatures are the same. The water is chilly (although my children somehow didn't seem to mind it), and the weather in general is fickle. One part of the island may have picture-perfect blue skies, while a relatively short drive up into the hills will be dense with clouds and rain.

Some of the highlights:

- The pineapples: I'm listing this first because the pineapples grown in The Azores are the best-tasting, most magical ones I've ever had. They are small—half the size of the pineapples we find here—and they are sweeter and tarter in perfect

proportion. Tasting those pineapples at the source has now become one of my favorite food memories. We learned how they are grown on the island at the Arruda Pineapple Plantation in Ponta Delgada, which has been growing pineapples for more than 100 years. The process involves greenhouses and a smoking room.

- Caldeira Velha: These hot springs are warmed by the volcanic heat of the earth and are surrounded by dense forest. There are four pools you can soak in, one is cool because a waterfall feeds into it, but the other three are hot, relaxing, and sulfuric—be sure to wear an old or dark-colored swimsuit. If you can



Left: The natural pools on the west side of São Miguel near Mosteiros. Right: The cooler pool at Caldeira Velha.

book ahead, be sure to do that. We just stopped by and the next time available was for 1.5 hours later, and that was during a non-peak travel time.

- Populo Beach (Praia do Pópulo): This wide beach with dark volcanic sand is near Ponta Delgada and has lifeguards on duty and a restaurant. The day we went there were large crashing waves that mesmerized my entire family, particularly my 6-year-old.
- The fumaroles at Furnas Lake (Lagoa das Furnas): These vents in the surface of the earth release hot, sulfuric, volcanic gases and open to pits of bubbling muddy water. In this particular location, those steaming pits are used by restaurants and locals to cook cozida das Furnas, a one-pot dish only made in the village of Furnas in the Azores. It is prepared in a cauldron that's placed in the pits over the boiling water, covered with a lid,

and then dirt is piled on, creating a mound that covers the hole completely. It cooks for several hours before the owners of those pits come to get their meal.

- Visit Fogo Lake and Sete Cidades Lake (Lagoa do Fogo and Lagoa das Sete Cidades): These beautiful crater lakes are a must-see when visiting São Miguel. Sete Cidades Lake is a twin lake, one green and one blue, with a bridge connecting them. If you are into walking or hiking, there are many options to explore around these lakes.
- Go to Miradouro/Vista do Rei (King's View): This lookout has a spectacular view of Sete Cidades Lake. It shouldn't be missed.
- Boco do Inferno is a beautiful walk through the trees to an (allegedly) amazing overlook of Sete Cidades. The day we visited was cloudy and drizzly, and we never got to see the view from there despite trying several days in a row. As my 8-year-



old said, "the clouds had gotten comfortable there." Regardless, the walk itself was a gorgeous, surreal experience, and my boys loved it because we got to walk in the clouds.

- Mosteiros Beach, Miradouro do Caminho Velho, and natural pools (piscinas naturais): I feel so lucky to have seen the black volcanic beach at Mosteiros with its sweeping views of the rock formations that sit along the coast. Our children played and we just sat, enjoying everything, for a long while. There are a couple little food stands there to get lunch or a snack. The natural pools and the overlook were uniquely beautiful too with views from the western side of the island.
- We drove to Nordeste on the eastern side of the island one evening to see the lighthouse there. The walk down to it was very steep, but there are overlooks in the small town that

continued on page 26, see Azores

give you superb views of the light-house and the coast without having to do the rather-intense walk.

• The hydrangeas: Like the pineapples, the hydrangeas in the Azores were their own level of wonder and a constant delight. Lush, globe-sized hydrangeas are all over the island, lining many of the roads, and can mainly be seen in colors of light blue, white, and cream. I did spot a few brightly colored pinkish-purple ones, and that felt like winning some kind of lottery.

Note: When searching for anything in maps, I had to use the Portuguese names for things. I recommend creating a Google map before you go so you don't have to doublecheck spelling en route.

Our flight back to Lisbon left early, and we were on our way to the airport before the sun rose. The streets were still dark and the roads quiet. As we were driving through one of the villages, the only other people we saw were a couple of guys in a van delivering fresh bread, hanging it in bags from their neighbors' front doorknobs. What a welcome way to start the day, and it was an ideal parting image of São Miguel.



Top: Near the marina in Vila Franca do Campo on the southern coast of São Miguel. Right: Our hazy walk among the clouds at Boco do Inferno.

Below: The Arruda Pineapple Plantation has been growing pineapples in the Azores for more than 100 years.

Below left: These mounds are covering cauldrons of cozida das Furnas, a one-pot dish only made in the village of Furnas.



Wine Tools and Gadgets: Do's and Don'ts, Essentials, and Gifts

By Alexis Douglas, certified sommelier

With so many tools and gadgets available for opening, chilling, serving, preserving, toting, gifting, storing and drinking wine, I thought I'd compile a list of my favorites (and a few of the most useless). Broken down by category, please refer to the pictures to get a better idea of what the items are and how they work. Most items are easily found on Amazon, but I've referenced a few local places for specialty items.

Opening >>

The waiter's corkscrew is by far the most essential tool for any wine drinker. Since it has a knife to cut the foil built-in, it is worth getting comfortable using this efficient tool. Starting around \$6, they're widely available at any wine shop and most groceries. For opening old bottles or dry crumbly corks, the "Ah-so" is another must-have since you can pull the cork out from the sides without stripping it. The "Rabbit" and other bulky openers are expensive, hard to use and do not include a tool to cut the foil if needed. Ah-so opener, \$7+, Amazon.

Chilling >>

An ice bucket filled with ice AND water is the absolute quickest way to chill a bottle (and keep bubbly super cold) but the reusable chiller sleeves (\$16.99, Amazon) are super handy and work great. Any tool that requires being kept in the freezer but comes into direct contact with wine (corksicle inserts,



depending on how much I need the wine to open up, the age, the style, and room on the table. A decanter stand is important also for proper drying (around \$20, Amazon).

Stoppers >>

Short silicone stoppers are my go-to since they fit snugly in the bottle and are short enough to be able to fit in the fridge! Save the tall pretty decorative ones for just that- looking pretty on your counter in a bottle of red. Champagne stoppers are useless and dangerous if they have two little arms/ clamps... look for those that have only one clamp to avoid popping out unexpectedly and for removing easily. Silicone stoppers, \$5.29 8-pack , Amazon/ Single-clamp Champagne stopper 2- pack \$10.99, Amazon

Serving, Polishing

Pretty serviettes are nice for wiping drips away so you don't have to pay your guests' dry cleaning bill or wash your fancy runner... lint-free towels are essential for polishing glassware and decanters. Kitchen towels, B. Bayer & Co, approx. \$25 with embroidery. Lint-free polishing towels, around \$7 each, Amazon.

Which Glass is Mine? >>

While wine “charms” are suitable for stemware, there are super options for stemless glasses as well! Glass markers are inexpensive and so fun- the sky's the limit, and the ink does not smear yet washes off easily! My favorite metallic set is \$10 on Amazon. Wine glass magnets come in a huge variety of themes (and prices!) and make a great gift. Just be warned that the magnets are super strong and can crack more delicate glasses if you're not careful.



Toting >>

I have three favorite totes for transporting bottles. The most-used are neoprene single and double totes by Built, which keep bottles safe and relatively cold, available at Red & White around \$15. The metallic nylon 3-pack sets by Baggu are fun to bring as a (re-usable) hostess gift with a bottle inside (\$34 for 3-pk on Amazon). The canvas double-bottle tote by Tom Beckbe was given to my husband as a gift, but we use it more for wine vs. its intended purpose for Bourbon; \$125, Tom Beckbe, additional charge for monogram.



<< Gifting

The most fun and silly wine gadget I have found recently is a bird wine stopper that doubles as a mild aerator and chirps when you pour! Swoozie's at the Summit, \$30. One of the most beautiful wine gifts I have received is a horn and silver holder/ pourer, pictured along with the totes. Hen House Antiques, English Village, price unknown.

Let's Toast

Allison Long Lowery has a new role as Vice President, DDM Content Studios for Dotdash Meredith. She will continue to oversee the Birmingham Food Studios as well as those in Des Moines and Shelburne, Vermont.



tenth team office in Portland, Maine. The New England office joins offices in Atlanta, Birmingham, Charleston, Durham, Kansas City, Nashville, New York, Richmond, and Washington, D.C. Melany and her family will be relocating to Maine next summer.

Melany Robinson, founder of Sprouthouse, has announced that her communications agency is opening a



April McClung, owner of Emily's Heirloom Pound Cakes, was one of five finalists for the National Retail Federation's 2022 America's Retail Champions honors. Finalists were national level.



Kristen Farmer Hall, along with co-owner Victor King, opened a new home in downtown Birmingham for Bandit Patisserie. The bakery offers a variety of seasonal flavors. Additionally, Hall and King opened Bar le Fête, a wine bar, on Sept. 2 in Mercantile on Morris.



Betsy McAtee says BUM Foods has begun production in a new state-of-the-art USDA facility. Located in the Airport Industrial Park, the space will double production capacity and increase the nationwide ecommerce business of offering Dreamland BBQ ribs, pork, chicken, and sausage. The space had undergone renovation for a year to meet higher demand in ecommerce sales.



Events Calendar

Tuesday, Sept. 20	5-7 p.m. Trimtab Brewing Co. 2721 5th Ave. South	"Hoppy Hour" educational beer tasting
Friday, Sept. 23	8 a.m.-2 p.m. Renaissance Ross Bridge	<i>Birmingham Business Journal's Women's Summit</i>
Thursday, Sept. 29	5 p.m. Location TBD	Financial class with Julie Helmers and Philippe Lathrop of Merrill Lynch
Sunday, Oct. 2	3-6 p.m. Shifts will start earlier, details to come Pepper Place	Champagne & Fried Chicken fundraiser
Oct. 20-23	Barclay InterContinental Hotel in New York City	LDEI International Conference

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