



Les Dames d'Escoffier  
INTERNATIONAL



Founded in 2013

[Ideibirmingham.org](http://Ideibirmingham.org)

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## President's Note

I saw something extraordinary recently. Several other Dames saw it, too.

We watched an important part of our Les Dames mission come to life when a group of us met with a half dozen other women—from here in the metro area and as far away as Montgomery—for our first mentoring meeting.

Cheryl Slocum is heading up our mentoring committee, and she is quickly positioning our chapter to do wonderful, meaningful things.

We gathered at Highlands Bar and Grill (and were treated to fresh coffee and coffecake by Pardis Stitt) for this initial meeting. It followed a vetting process that we used to identify mentees. I won't get into the specifics of this meeting because Donna Cornelius is covering it on page 5 of this newsletter.

But I want to try to convey the importance of this outreach effort. It has always been part of our mission of education, advocacy, mentoring, and philanthropy. Since we were founded in 2013, we've made significant progress in most of these areas. We should be especially proud of our

*continued on page 4, see Letter*

## Guiding lights: Mentoring program kicks off



*Under the leadership of Dame Cheryl Slocum, on January 23, the Emerging Women Entrepreneur's Mentoring Program kicked off. See page 5 to read more about the program.*



# Southern Soirée 2020 Planning Begins

By Susan Swagler

Southern Soirée has grown into a successful, highly anticipated event, and our Soirée committees need to grow, too.

Kathy G. Mezrano and Kay Bruno Reed have headed this effort for the past two years, and last year Barbara Kenyon stepped in, too.

The Soirée committee has mostly stayed the same, as well. All these women—a core group of about 17—have done absolutely fantastic work these past few years, but there is room for everyone at this table.

At the committee’s wrap-up meeting last fall, two big things were decided: We need to move the event from the long Columbus Day week-end, and we need to involve every single Dame in some way or another.

So Southern Soirée 2020 will be held on Sunday, September 20 at the Barn at Shady Lane, and our goal is 100 percent Dame participation in this event.

As you all know, this is our only fundraiser. It is key to who we are and what we do. We need everyone to have a hand in it. And indeed there is room for everyone to contribute to Soirée before, during and even after the event. Our talents run deep.

So on Sunday, February 9, the membership met at Innovation Depot (thanks to Jennifer Yarbrough for securing this space!) to talk about various committees and their needs and which Dames can fill

those needs. And, of course, every member is asked to buy a ticket and sell some, too.

And each member (not just those on the sponsorship committee!) is highly encouraged to pursue sponsorships. We already have a sponsorship packet ready to send out so companies can plan their giving with us in mind.

A core committee—Kathy G., Martha Johnston, Leigh Sloss-Corra, Rachel West, and Susan Swagler—came up with a “wish list” of committees. Since these women have handled various aspects of Soirée over two events or more, they know exactly where help is needed. Everyone at the February meeting was asked to sign up for a committee and find a task that best suits her talents.

The Soirée executive committee is made up of the Event Chair and Co-Chair(s) and the chairs of the following committees:

- Food & Beverage (menu; chefs to prepare/donate food; outreach for ingredients, Ice by Design, wine, liquor, other; ice truck)
- Logistics (lighting, sound, band, layout, set-up, break-down)
- Video Presentation (create video for event featuring sponsors, scholarship winners, Dames; negotiate equipment)
- Ticketing (online and at the door, set up website and connect to LDEI Bham site, issue sponsor tickets and comp tickets)
- Greeters/Check-In (the first faces our guests see, manage check-in

with online ticketing software)

- Signage (posters printed and distributed, signage at event, sponsor logos)
- Outreach/Volunteers (secure and manage student volunteers at the event)
- Marketing & PR (press releases, local media contacts, work with ticketing on comp tickets)
- Social Media (dedicated social media for this event!)
- List Management (manage master list from tickets, sponsorships, purchases)
- Silent Auction (secure items, print signage and thank-you notes/instructions, assist bidders, check-out)
- Sponsorship (secure sponsors, logos, help manage thank-you letters)
- Thank-You Letters (everyone who contributes to Soirée gets one; that’s a lot of notes)
- Budget (set it, hold us to it!)

These main committees were discussed in detail, and Dames were instructed to find an area in which to volunteer. They also were encouraged to sign up to be committee chairs or co-chairs.

Chapter president Susan Swagler told the membership, “I am certain that each and every one of you can contribute in ways that will make a huge difference. And I am just as certain you will enjoy your role. It is a lot of work, but it is extremely satisfying to be a part of this event. You will see.”

# Holiday Botanicals Cocktail Class Inspires Attendees



A November Holiday Botanicals Cocktails class conducted by Feizal Valli and Rachel Roberts, owners of the James Beard Award-nominated Atomic Lounge (very top left), kicked off the fall holiday season for Birmingham Dames. Dames Kathy G Mezrano and Jan Gautro organized the class, held at Kathy G’s Gardens Café. It was popular with members and guests!





philanthropy. When talking to other chapters at the international conference, I quickly realized that we are doing a fantastic job with our grants and scholarships. Our giving is impressive. For a relatively young chapter and compared to a lot of other chapters, too.

And we've done some worthwhile things in the area of education. I believe the Food Bank still uses that holiday food safety brochure we produced. Advocacy seems easy for us. Our members routinely volunteer to judge competitions ranging from wings at the Literacy Council to gumbo for Episcopal Place to the ProStart high school culinary competitions. We write to our representatives in Congress when necessary and personally represent what's best about our state and our organization whenever we get the opportunity.

But mentoring. That part of our mission needed doing.

And now, we're doing it. I went to that initial meeting in the role of president and to support Cheryl as she guides this new group. I'll offer word-related help if needed with menus and marketing materials, but many of our mentees are looking for advice on scaling their businesses. They want to know how to transition from a small kitchen to a commercial one. They want tips on keeping staff happy. Some want guidance with recipe development.

There were plenty of Dames at the meeting who have been there and successfully done all that and much more.

Ashley McMakin started her thriving business in her Homewood apartment kitchen. She's about to open a fifth location. Geri-Martha O'Hara's incredibly popular

ice cream shops started with a deep freeze and a folding table in her own driveway. Margaret Ann Snow, a new Dame, has grown a family farm into a coveted and trusted supplier for many of our local high-end restaurants. Snow's Bend is name checked on fancy menus all over town.

Brand-new Dame (and Food Network star) Raquel Ervin's successful Panoptic Catering started with a single event. The friends she had to recruit that day to help her are still on her team.

Another new Dame, Mary-Frances Heck, senior food editor at *Food & Wine*, knows a thing or two about recipe development. So does Carey Thomasson, who went from being a private chef in New York to bringing her worldwide cooking experience to a local specialty café serving healthy, from-scratch foods.

Rebel Negley has years of executive experience in the food and beverage industry, including her amazing work with Redemption Kitchens and second-chance opportunities for

women. And everyone would like to be able to extend the genuinely gracious hospitality that is Pardis Stitt's signature.

They all were there. They know how to do what our mentees want to learn.

I looked over at Dame Leigh Sloss-Corra at one point and whispered, "Wow! Just look at all these incredible women. Think of all the experience and brain power in this room right now."

I am grateful that they and the other Dames in attendance that day stepped up to share what they know, what experience and hard work has taught them.

I am thankful for Cheryl Slocum's leadership and her willingness to start this program from scratch.

And I am proud that—with this mentoring program—we are reaching new potential as an organization. That we are realizing yet another way to make a positive difference in our food communities.

All the best,  
Susan Swagler

## Kathy G visits Hewitt-Trussville



*Giving a restaurant experience to clients through off-premise catering was the topic Kathy G. Mezrano addressed when she spoke to the culinary classes at Hewitt-Trussville High School in November. The students responded enthusiastically to a hands-on demonstration of building a Tuscan tabletop display as well as a discussion about the structure for larger events and how to get started.*

# LDEI Bham launches mentoring program

By Donna Cornelius

Getting a food business off the ground floor is a daunting task, but one of our chapter's newest programs aims to make that challenge a little easier.

LDEI Birmingham's Emerging Women Entrepreneurs Mentoring Program had an enthusiastic kick-off on January 23, at Highlands Bar and Grill. Chairman Cheryl Slocum introduced seven women, all the owners of emerging food businesses, who have signed up to participate in

our mentoring program. The participants got a chance to talk about their ventures and then to chat with our chapter members who attended.

Cheryl said the program will start with bimonthly meetings covering different topics, such as finances, marketing, recipe development, administrative organization, and the wholesale and retail processes.

"These programs will run through September," she said, adding that after that, mentors and mentees will be matched up for several months of one-on-one relationships.

Mentor program participants are Millie Drumm of Sunrise Baking Co. in Hoover, Tara Logel of Cookie Destiny in Hoover, Elizabeth Roberts of Market 46 Bakery in Birmingham, Jennifer Senske Ryan of Blue Root Co. in Birmingham, Tanesha Sims-Summers of Naughty But Nice Kettle Corn in Birmingham, Joy Smith of Sorelle in Homewood, and Monique Williams of The Cheesecake Empori-Yum in Montgomery.

## 2020 Update from Membership Committee

By Leigh Sloss-Corra

It's February and we are already well into a new year of strengthening our chapter's membership and growth. Last August, we voted in and welcomed in 15 extraordinary new members, a significant increase from recent years, bringing our total membership to 66. Wow!

As happens, of course, there was ebb and flow. We are professional women after all and life is ever-changing. Two members moved away, and one requested to become inactive due to illness, but others will reactivate their memberships or transfer in from other cities. The message is: Make the most of your

chance right now to connect with this community of women who are all interested in the same things you are—what a gift! Attend the programs, meet-ups, and volunteer opportunities and bond with your sister Dames. Life events will come and go, but these relationships could be the most enduring you'll ever have.

With that said, membership nomination season will begin in April. Start now to look around your workplaces and your own networks for women you think would be good contributing members of our chapter. Meet for coffee or a bite and get to know them a little better. Tell them about who we

are and what we do, and gauge their interest in becoming a Dame. Invite them to some of the LDEI events that are open to non-members, and introduce them around. A vibrant membership is possible because we care and are always growing.

Look for an email from me with dates and details about the nomination process soon. Make your membership count and commit to nominate at least one potential member this year. If you have questions or would like to serve on the Membership Committee, contact Membership Committee Chair Leigh Sloss-Corra at leigh@pepperplacemarket.com.



# Culinary Classroom: Members Meet for Lunch at Jeff State Community College



Dames enjoyed a multi-course lunch at Jeff State Community College and spent some quality time with the student chefs (shown at left) who cooked the delicious dishes. Kathy G. Mezrano was also able to share some of her expertise with the students. Above (left to right): Linda Crowley, Rosemary Dallam, Gia McCollister, Susan Nash Gilpin, Kathy G. Mezrano, Martha Johnston, Raquel Ervin, and Jan Gautro.

# Meet Our New Members!

Our chapter gained fifteen new members in August 2019. Here, get to know more of these extraordinary women a little better.

## Charbett Cauthern

**Place of birth:** Birmingham, Alabama  
**College/professional school(s) attended, major, degree earned:** The University of Alabama at Birmingham, Business Administration  
**Current position:** Greystone Golf and County Club, part-time consultant for membership development  
**How did you get your start?** During high school and college I had the opportunity to work with a local county club in Birmingham. My mother also was the account for



time and became hooked on the hospitality industry.  
**What do you enjoy about your current position?** Meeting people and learning from some of the best hospitality professionals in the area.

the club and she taught me the back and front of the house. I worked in the kitchen most of the

**What does success look like to you?** Happiness in loving you're work. I've never felt like it was work that I was doing, just looking forward to it.  
**If you could plan your last meal, what would it be?** Spaghetti and meatballs.  
**If you had one week free of all obligations and \$5,000, where would you go and what would you do?** Travel to Europe and enjoy the history, food, culture, and great wines.

## Allison Lowery

**Place of birth:** Orlando, Florida  
**College/professional school(s) attended, major, degree earned:** University of Alabama, BA in English and History; MA in English.  
**Current position:** Director, Meredith Food Studios  
**How did you get your start?** I started as an editorial intern at Oxmoor House, the book publishing division of Southern Progress Corporation.

**What do you enjoy about your current position?** I most enjoy the diversity of content we get to create in the Food Studios. We can go from truly elevated and refined recipes to down-home cooking in a day because we work for such a broad range of brands in the Food Studios. I thrive in an



environment of change, and publishing is nothing but change these days. I see this as an opportunity rather than a burden to keep challenging myself to elevate our work for new platforms and for new audiences every day.  
**What does success look like to you?** The other highlight of my job are the people I work with. Nothing looks like success more than a team of people who have accomplished something beautiful together as a team. Even with all the change, we all want to create beautiful recipes, photographs, and videos for our audience. I aim to help create an environment where this is possible.

environment of change, and publishing is nothing but change these days. I see this as an opportunity rather

**If you could plan your last meal, what would it be?** Any sort of simple pasta with the best Parmigiano-Reggiano and olive oil, lots of red wine, and a view of the ocean will do just fine. Any ocean will do.  
**If you had one week free of all obligations and \$5,000, where would you go and what would you do?** I would retrace the steps I took through Italy when I studied there as a college student with my beloved husband and my two girls.  
**Bonus!** While food is my passion and I'm lucky enough to have a career based around food, I am a lover of all the arts. Theatre, singing, writing, and visual arts are my other true loves. I have always seen culinary arts as an extension of my love of the arts in general.



# Raquel Erwin

**Place of birth:** I was born and raised in Mobile, Alabama and later relocated to my second home Birmingham in 2012

**Current position:** Executive chef and owner of Panoptic Catering.

**How did you get your start?**

I started cooking at a very young age often standing on a chair to reach the stove. What was once a childhood culinary learning experience at the age of 12 working in two family restaurants, plus many years of corporate restaurant experience, inspired me to become and chef and led me to start my own business in 2014.

**What do you enjoy about your current position?**

I enjoy being able to work in a field



which also happens to be my passion. I enjoy learning and experiencing so many different areas within the

culinary industry that are not always related to the cooking of food. Meeting new people like food writers, food photographers, cook-book authors, and other chefs who specialize in cuisines that differ from mine, is always exciting to engage with. The industry is consistently developing new ideas, so there is never a dull moment.

**What does success look like to you?** Success to me is finding your passion and growing within that industry. For me that is build-

ing multiple culinary entities under one brand.

**If you could plan your last meal, what would it be?** My last meal would consist of my favorite foods which are crab claws and crab legs with a side of Chick-fil-A.

**If you had one week free of all obligations and \$5,000, where would you go and what would you do?** I would travel to Japan and enjoy the authentic culture and cuisines.

**Bonus:** Aside from culinary, my hobby is photography. I am also the youngest of 6 children, my siblings' range in age from 47-62. Although rather young, I am often referred to as someone with an old soul.

# Mary-Frances Heck

**Place of birth:** Boston, Massachusetts

**College/professional school(s) attended, major, degree earned:**

University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA; BA in History The Culinary Institute of America, Hyde Park, NY; AOS in Culinary Arts

**Current position:** Senior Food Editor, *Food & Wine*

**How did you get your start?**

I always wanted to be a chef, and an internship in a magazine test kitchen during culinary school paved the way to becoming an editor.



**What do you enjoy about your current position?**

2020 is a thrilling time to be working in food and the

changing media landscape provides opportunities for creative strategy, audience engagement, and new approaches to food coverage and recipes.

**What does success look like to you?**

When I worked in restaurants, the adage about being “only as good as your last plate of food” was a standard for daily achievement. Sadly, I think this kind of high pressure, black-and-white thinking is why so

many young cooks struggle to find meaning in the industry. After switching gears to editorial work and recipe development, excellence and perfection still apply, but success is marked by how others take inspiration from the work, and how it goes on to impact how they care for themselves and their communities.

**If you could plan your last meal, what would it be?** There is no finer meal than a fully dressed fried shrimp po' boy.

**If you had one week free of all obligations and \$5,000, where would you go and what would you do?** I'd take my wife and my parents to Burgundy and drink Saint Aubin with lunch every day.

# Kristen Farmer Hall

**Place of birth:** Dalton, Georgia

**College/professional school(s) attended, major, degree earned:**

Bachelors in pre-med biology, Samford University; masters in public health, UAB

**Current position:** Owner and executive pastry chef of The Essential and Bandit Patisserie

**How did you get your start?**

My first pastry company, Baking Bandits, started in October 2013 with my young daughters, Emma and Eleanor. We would leave packages of pastries on friend's doorsteps and ring the doorbell and run away. That's how we became



known as The Baking Bandits! Since then, it's been a wild adventure! My partner, Victor King, and I

opened our first cafe, Feast and Forest, in November 2015. We expanded and built a new restaurant in 2018, The Essential, on historic Morris Avenue. We most recently opened our brick and mortar pastry shop, Bandit Patisserie, in Homewood.

**What do you enjoy about your current position?**

The restaurant industry is such an amazing adventure. It isn't for the faint of heart, but it's a beautiful opportunity to serve and care for our

community! And, as an owner, I am able to both learn from and invest in every area of our shop(s).

**What does success look like to you?** I would define success as when both our guests and our staff truly feel the care and passion we invest in our service, our spaces and our food.

**If you could plan your last meal, what would it be?** My last meal would include shrimp cocktail, Caesar salad, grilled filet, potato au gratin, roasted Brussels sprouts, and salted caramel ice cream.

**If you had one week free of all obligations and \$5,000, where would you go and what would you do?** What a dream! I would go to France and melt into its tiny, coastal villages!

# Cristina Almanza

**Place of birth:** Torreon, Coahuila, Mexico

**College/professional school(s) attended, major, degree earned:**

Jacksonville State University; bachelors of fine arts in graphic design; masters of business administration

**Current position:** Buffalo Rock Company business development coordinator, Birmingham division

**How did you get your start?**

I have been part of the food industry for most of my life. My dad owns his own company in Mexico selling dairy parlors. I grew up learning from my dad the challenges and needs of dairy farmers. When I moved to the US, I took a brief pause and worked with marketing for dental centers. When I moved to Birmingham, I worked at Vulcan Park and Museum, including the venue area which involved working with food caterers and setting up for events. I have come full circle



and now am employed by Buffalo Rock. Working at Buffalo Rock reminds me a lot of my dad's business.

**What do you enjoy about your current position?** I love the fact that my position involves community engagement as well as business development. I have seen so many new businesses start and in it enjoy that in a small way I can help them grow and seen their success. With many of these new business owners, I have become good friends, and with many I share deep memories. It is the versatility of my job and helping people grow their dreams that I love the most.

**What does success look like to you?** Success to me is being in harmony and being content with what you do. Sure, there will be challenges, but to have internal peace because you are

happy with what you do and being able to enjoy continued growth.

**If you could plan your last meal, what would it be?** There are so many great dishes in the world, and I have been fortunate to taste so many cuisines. It would be a combination of really good barbecue, a drink from the Atomic Bar crafted by Feizal Valli, and Mexican Street corn outside the Parisina store in my hometown.

**If you had one week free of all obligations and \$5,000, where would you go and what would you do?** I would definitely travel, my future husband and I have an ongoing list of places we would like to see.

**Bonus!** I have been blessed in many ways in my life. And though I have had several recognitions in my life, in the spring of 2019, I probably by far got the coolest recognition; I have had a drink named after me, and you can find it at the Atomic Bar in Birmingham.



# Behind the Scenes: A conversation with Idie Hastings on community involvement

By Martha Johnston

As a child in Cleveland, Ohio, Idie Hastings never dreamed of becoming a chef and owning a restaurant, even though her Italian family life was focused around meals and family activities. She often accompanied her dad to shop at farmers’ markets and Italian delis, and as a result of these adventures was exposed to great food at an early age. Her Grandma Morano and Aunts Mary and Emma often volunteered to prepare food for those in need. No doubt these vivid memories have had a powerful impact on Idie.

As time passed, Idie moved to Birmingham and completed her degree in criminal justice/psychology. Her original goal was to be a psychologist, but she found herself gravitating more toward food and hospitality as a career. Several years later Idie moved to San Francisco where she not only finished her associate degree at California Culinary Academy, but also worked at Wolfgang Puck’s Postrio and Jeremiah Tower’s famous Stars Café. In addition, she perfected her baking skills at Patisserie Française. By the time she and her family returned to Birmingham her course was set. The family opened Hot and Hot Fish Club in 1995, OvenBird in 2015, and Hot and Hot 2.0 in January 2020 (see Hot and Hotter, page 14).

### How did you get involved in philanthropy?

Having been so lucky to have the support of Birmingham for 25 years, I wanted to give back to the



Nigel and Idie Hastings spend time each week visiting with patients at UAB’s O’Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center.

community. I chose Hand in Paw and the O’Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center to volunteer my time and services. I wanted to raise money for the organizations that touched my heart.

I joined the Cancer Center in honor of my mother-in-law who passed from liver cancer when Chris was 18. Because I have loved animals since I was a child, I wanted to become a therapy team and help to raise funds with Hand in Paw whose mission is to improve human health and well-being through animal-assisted therapy.

Once Nigel [a rescue from Cavalier Rescue of Alabama] was trained to be my pet partner, I was motivated to combine these two organizations. So I asked to be placed on the hematology/oncology unit at the O’Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center at UAB so Nigel and I could

visit the patients, nurses, and doctors on that floor.

### What difference has this made in your life?

The reward I receive from doing this type of philanthropy is the comfort and joy that I experience with my patients. When I think I am having a bad day, all my troubles go away as soon as I visit the unit.

The patients touch me more than they realize. They all look forward to the visits with Nigel and me. I always let them talk freely about anything they want. These visits have put life into perspective for me. Sometimes, I think I need the weekly visits more than they do. It is peaceful. I am so grateful it centers me and makes me want to do more for those suffering with cancer.

If I look back on my life, I am not surprised that out of all the



organizations I could have joined, these two are where I landed. My philanthropy started as a way to give back to the community, to help build awareness, and to contribute as a board member of each by fund raising. It was very important for me personally to customize what I do with my free time.

### Why is your LDEI involvement important to you?

For the first time in Birmingham and Alabama, we have an international organization of professional women in food, beverage, and hospitality who are focused on philanthropy, education, advocacy, and mentoring. It is import to have a strong, creative group to share ideas and seek advice. And the focus of the group gives me the opportunity

to share my experiences and information with younger women. I’ve also been able to use my fundraising skills to bring in sponsorship dollars for our ongoing scholarship, grant, and educational programs. When women support women, we can accomplish so much, and I love that!

### What will your “next act” be?

Love of dogs and food, stepping outside of my comfort zone, and being of service to others will hopefully lead me to my next act after the restaurant business. I want to start a dog food company using all natural ingredients. Products will be non-GMO and most will consist of five or less ingredients. I already have a line of biscuits and treats and have designated a portion of the proceeds to benefit Hand in Paw.



Idie has created a life of purpose with her beloved restaurants, her wholesome pet treat business, and her work (with Nigel) and Hand in Paw.



# The Market at Pepper Place Celebrates 20 Years of Freshness



Pepper Place Market has grown into a weekly regional attraction, and is a contributor to Birmingham’s reputation as a top-level food city..

By Leigh Sloss-Corra

This year marks the 20th anniversary of The Market at Pepper Place, the largest weekly, producer-only certified farmers’ market in the state of Alabama. With 350,000 visitors annually, and 100 tents spreading over two blocks during peak months, this year-round market in downtown Birmingham has helped small Alabama family farmers survive and thrive, contributed to the city’s revitalization, incubated over 60 small businesses, and fostered

and helped define Birmingham as a city that cares about food and community. Chefs, food writers and publishers, farmers, dietitians, health professionals, and foodies convene at the Market every Saturday. Nowhere in the region can visitors find as much local culinary diversity in one spot. Dames play a significant role in this market’s history and success. Dame Cathy Sloss Jones is the founder and current chair of the Market board, of which Dame Pardis Stitt is also a member. Dame

Leigh Sloss-Corra is Market executive director. Half a dozen Birmingham Dames are currently vendors at the Market. Over a dozen Dames hosted chef demonstrations at the Market last year. In September, an entire month is dedicated to top women in food, thanks to a partnership with LDEI’s Birmingham chapter. For the 20th anniversary, the Market will celebrate this milestone by shining an even brighter spotlight on women in food with help from LDEI. Several Dames are helping coordinate the big fund-

raiser being planned for the upcoming 20th birthday celebration. This spring, the Market will team up with Dame Kristen Hall on a bake sale event featuring local pastry chefs, most of whom are women. Later this summer, Dame Brooke Bell and one of Hoffman Media’s magazines will team up with the Market on a benefit for No Kid Hungry. In September, LDEI will “take over” the weekly chef demos again as the Market devotes an entire month to female food professionals. These events and more will be supported by member Dames, as well as scholarship winners, and the mentees in LDEI Birmingham’s Mentorship Program who are currently vendors at the Market (see page 5 for more about the mentoring program). With so many Dames shaping its vision and doing the work, day in and day out, the Market has charted a path to success for the future. Happy 20th, and here’s to the next 20 years!



Above: In 2004, Frank Stitt signed copies of Southern Table at the market. Jake Reis of Alabama Booksmith offered encouragement and assistance.



Above: Dame Margaret Ann Snow of Snows Bend Farm, was one of the market’s early participants and is one of the most popular vendors at the market. Each September, Dames takeover the chef demos. At right, Susan Swagler, Becky Satterfield, and Brittany Cheatham.





# Cyndy Cantley Talks Kitchen Trends



Above (left to right): Jan Gautro, Linda Crowley, Gia McCollister, Mary Esther Carpenter, Cindy Cantley, Jennifer Yarbrough, Rosalyn Bloomston, Sonthe Burge, and Telia Johnson gather at Cantley & Company on February 12 to talk about the latest kitchen trends. Top left: Dame Telia Johnson also led a tasting of savory scones and her famous chocolate cake. At left: Leigh Sloss-Corra, Martha Johnston, Cyndy Cantley, Sonthe Burge, and Kathy G. Mezrano discussed cabinet, hardware, and appliance trends. According to Cyndy, the steam oven and painted cabinets are definitely in fashion.

# Hot and Hotter: Version 2.0 opens at Pepper Place

By Jan Walsh

Hot and Hot Fish Club 2.0 is now open at Pepper Place. Both the ambience and the cuisine have evolved, while maintaining a culinary brand that took owners Chris and Idie Hastings 25 years to build.

Multiple Alabama architects and interior design teams collaborated on the new space that includes a chef's counter and

open kitchen, with the same look feel as the original. The new restaurant also boasts large windows, exposed brick galore, a 17-foot upholstered banquette, Greystone Italian marble tabletops, locally sourced hackberry wood, a private dining space, and a bar with a boat frame floating above it. Version 2.0 of Hot and Hot Fish Club's new space seats 120 guests verses 80. And the patio is much larger, too.

The family business also grew at 2.0 with their son, Zeb Hastings, working alongside his dad in his new role as sous chef. And Zeb's wife, Molly Hastings, serving as manager of operations, is working with Idie. The Hastings' new menu offers fresh pastas inspired by Idie's Italian family recipes and R&D Kitchen Small Plates. Yet alongside new culinary creations, patrons' past favorites remain on the menu.

# Lights, camera, food: a workshop on taking better food photos with iPhones

By Susan Swagler

We all take food photos with our phones. We all can take better food photos with our phones.

That truth was the inspiration for one of this year's first programs: a lesson from professional food photographer Becky Stayner.

A group of Dames and some lucky guests met on Sunday, January 12, at 3 p.m. at El ZunZún where they gathered around Becky and watched her take photos of El ZunZún's lovely, delicious dishes.

It was clear, very quickly, that Becky sees the world with an artist's eye—considering light and shadow as well as her subject. And she showed us how to manipulate that with reflective paper and white and black panels (we all took home our own pieces so we could play).

She also always tries to achieve a “yum” factor with her photos. She says the photo has to convey the smell and taste of the food as well as the visual aspect. The photo should try to put the viewer at the table. Some other tips:

- Daylight is the best light. Late afternoon is the very best. Morning light works, too. Try to avoid harsh, midday light.
- Don't be afraid to mess with the food on your plate. Remove some things, if it's too crowded. Take out a bite to make it look more real.
- Consider the perspective—if a dish is tall, take the photo from a



Professional photographer Becky Stayner led the workshop, teaching Dames and guests how to enhance their iPhone photos. At right: Jennifer Yarbrough put those skills to work for her business.



level position to take advantage of the shape; if a dish is mostly flat, take the photo from directly above.

- Take multiple photos, and then crop and adjust them on your computer.

Several Dames who are food stylists were in attendance and stepped in to offer their presentation tips. So several members asked for a follow-up program led by these smart women.



# Wines to Welcome the Spring Season

By Alexis Douglas,  
certified sommelier

Here are a few of my recent favorite finds that will pair well with spring weather, cuisine, and events. All are available at Hop City:

### WHITES

- H. Goutorbe “Special Club” Champagne 2006, \$88.99  
Incredible value for this caliber of grower Champagne! This gorgeous blend of 70% Pinot Noir/ 30% Chardonnay offers generous fruit with notes of berry pie and toast but finishes elegant and mineral. Could still age for a few years but drinking beautifully now.
- Grosjean Petite Arvine, Valle d’Aosta, Italy, \$32.99

From some of the highest-elevation biodynamic vineyards in the Italian Alps, this luscious white is a treat. Mountain wines are super flavorful and complex since the grapes get stressed at altitude and store more nutrients and less water (which means more concentration). Also currently by the glass at Bottega!



- Evening Land “Seven Springs” Chardonnay, Eola-Amity Hills, Oregon, \$26.99  
One of the most beautiful, well-balanced Chardonnay I have found in years. Rich and generous, yet vibrant and bright. Dangerously drinkable!



### REDS

- Colterenzio Lagrein, Alto-Adige, Italy, \$16.99:  
Ripe wild berry fruit, velvety texture, a hint of chocolate and an excellent value. Excellent pairing with my venison lasagna, but light and drinkable enough to chill a bit and enjoy into the warmer months.



- Terre Rouge “Tete-a-Tete” Rhône Blend, Sierra Foothills, CA, \$20.99  
Notice the vintage in the picture! This is current release...they basically age all of their wines for you. Expect some sediment due to the age, so either decant or be careful pouring the last glass from the bottle! A ridiculous value for an incredible, complex, drinkable, impressive stunner. You can’t go wrong with any of their wines so try them all if you can!



- Salvestrin “Cavaso” Red Blend, St. Helena, CA, \$19.99  
This incredible small-production red (Merlot/ Syrah/ Petite Syrah/Cab) is from an estate-grown vineyard and family-owned winery in St. Helena for under \$20! Unheard of. Layered, refined tannins, concentrated fruit, and a long finish. A must try.



# ..... Dames Recommend .....

### Chianti region, Italy

Gia McCollister

I highly recommend you consider exploring the Chianti area for your next trip to Italy. You will find beautiful green hills with miles and miles of vineyards and olive groves, Etruscan walled villages built long before Julius Caesar, romantic stone farmhouses, and panoramic curved roads with well-preserved historic castles and fortresses. The Area of Chianti Classico spreads from Florence to Siena and includes many municipalities well worth a visit.

While in Chianti visit the local markets or explore one of the many museums and churches along the way. Be sure to check out the local events that include wine festivals, sagras (food parties), markets, and seasonal celebrations. There are plenty of events throughout the year.

The towns that I visited in December were a short distance from my home base, Greve di Chianti, considered by many as the doorway into Chianti. You will find great shops to stock your pantry like the butcher, Macelleria Falorni. Barberino Val d’Elsa is a hill town with nice restaurants and panoramic views of the area. The very famous San Gimignano has 14 medieval towers and is a favorite for tourists. The town of Certaldo has Etruscan-Roman archeological finds. Badia a Passignano has a Monastery that belongs to the Antinori wine empire. You can visit the Monastery (reserve tickets before you arrive) and eat in one of the fabulous restaurants. San Donato in Poggio is a small village at the top of the hill that still conserves

continued on page 18



Above: The view of Barberino Val d’Elsa in the Chianti region from the McCollister’s hotel room. At right: Gia and Porter McCollister were joined by her son-in-law Sandro and grandson Antonio.





its medieval heritage. Castellina in Chianti is the most medieval of the Chianti towns.

Last but not least, Florence and Siena are close by and well worth a visit or a stay.

**Charleston**  
*Susan Swagler*

Charleston is one of the top tourist destinations in the country, and many of our members know it well. I try to get there a few times a year, and here are some of my favorite things to do and see and eat.

Grab a late-night cocktail one evening at Baba’s on Cannon (11 Cannon Street, [www.babasoncannon.com](http://www.babasoncannon.com)). This cozy, all-day, old-world cafe serves coffee and house-made pastries in the morning and sandwiches and salads in the afternoon. During the evenings, you’ll find apértivo service with carefully chosen wines, creative cocktails, and delicious snacks. Try the brioche grilled cheese with a giant cheese crisp on top. You can sit at the bar and watch them make it for you. This cafe has a Birmingham connection: It belongs to Frank Stitt’s daughter, Marie, and her husband, Edward Crouse. And we were delighted to run into Pardis when we were there!

I usually spend some time shopping on King Street. I also love to take my running shoes and head to The Battery via the waterfront path by Rainbow Row. I walk through the French Quarter and go to the Market to buy souvenirs from the Historic Charleston Foundation store (silver rice seed bead bracelets, anyone? Also, there’s no sales tax at the Foundation store).

Raw oysters and royal reds at The Ordinary (544 King Street, [www.eattheordinary.com](http://www.eattheordinary.com)) are a great way to spend any evening. This fancy



*Baba’s on Cannon is a cozy, all-day, old-world cafe that serves coffee and house-made pastries in the morning and sandwiches and salads in the afternoon. During the evenings, you’ll find apértivo service with carefully chosen wines, creative cocktails, and delicious snacks.*

oyster hall is in a beautiful historic building that used to house a bank. FYI, you can get \$1.50 oysters during Oyster Happy Hour (Tuesday-Friday 5-6:30). The restaurant belongs to James Beard Award-winning chef Mike Lata (Best Chef Southeast 2009) and business partner Adam Nemirow, the same team behind FIG (another personal favorite place).

Last time I was in Charleston, my daughter Allison knew I was going to The Ordinary one evening, and she called ahead and ordered an assortment of South Carolina raw oysters that included Roddy Rocks and Single Ladies and Sea Clouds and long, thin Capers Blades. I skipped the cocktail sauce in favor of the ginger mignonette. A glass of cold Les Gras Moutons Muscadet was perfect, too. I loved my dish of charcoal-grilled royal red shrimp over polenta with shrimp nage.

The next day, I took a scenic two-mile walk through old neighborhoods to eat lunch at Nana’s Seafood & Soul with its classic Gullah-Geechie dishes and fresh seafood. Someone told me that the rapper 2 Chainz had eaten there the week before. That turned out not to be true, but Waka Flocka Flame had been in a few months earlier for the shrimp and lobster boats and fried crab legs. I enjoyed the crab mac and cheese and spicy garlic shrimp very much.

I always find time to visit my very favorite place in this city: the garden cemetery at The Unitarian Church in Charleston (4 Archdale Street, [www.charleston-uu.org](http://www.charleston-uu.org)). On the last morning of my visits, I always get a French press coffee and a fresh, warm, flaky almond croissant from Christophe Artisan Chocolatier-Pâtissier (90 Society Street,

[www.christophechocolatier.com](http://www.christophechocolatier.com)) and take my breakfast to an old stone bench at the cemetery.

Founded in 1787, this is one of the oldest Unitarian Churches in the United States and the oldest one in the South. There is a monument outside to honor the slaves who actually built this church—they even made the very bricks that form the walls. The cemetery is a beautifully wild place with plants—some 200 years old—growing from the plots. It’s incredibly peaceful.

You can get to it off King Street; there’s a gate sort of hidden near and across the street from the Billy Reid store. Go down an alley, and find yourself in another world. If the church is open, you’ll want to go in. The people there are so welcoming, and they love to share details of the beautiful church with visitors.

Before we head home, we always go back to Christophe for a ham and Brie sandwich for the road. These are exactly like what you’ll find at little bakeries and even in corner stores all over France. And chocolates. We always get an assortment of Christophe’s extraordinary chocolates. No trip to Charleston is complete without these.

## Scholarship Committee sets application deadlines

*By Donna Cornelius*

One of our chapter’s most important missions is providing financial support to deserving women and organizations. Our Scholarship and Awards Committee met on Dec. 9 to work on this important task.

At the meeting, committee members agreed to update the applications for community college and four-year university scholarships and for new entrepreneurs. Nomi-

nations for the Nonprofit Organization award were open to our entire chapter at our Feb. 9 meeting.

March 9, is the deadline for all applications. The selection process will take place during the week of March 16. The awards ceremony will be on April 5 at El ZunZun (thanks, Dame Becky Satterfield), and all Dames and award winners will be invited.

One change from past years: Instead of offering teacher grants and scholarships for high school

students, our chapter will support the two high school teams that win the Alabama ProStart Competition, set for March 8-10 in Orange Beach, and who will then travel to the national competition. Dames Rosemary Dallam and Rebel Negley will judge the state contest and represent our chapter.

The committee voted to ask our executive board for \$30,000 to distribute for scholarships, awards, and the ProStart competition expenses.

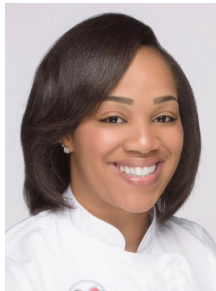


# Let's Toast

**Christina Almanza** has been named to the *Birmingham Business Journal's* 2020 Top 40 Under 40. She is the business development coordinator for the Birmingham division of Bufalo Rock and involved in a number of community organizations where she is able to effectively utilize her trilingual skills.



**Raquel Ervin**, executive chef and owner of Panoptic Catering, has been named President of the American Culinary Federation Birmingham Chapter. Raquel started her own business in 2014 and recently appeared in two primetime shows on the Food Network as well as the Cooking Channel.



**Anne Cain**, R. D., was named one of the Top 25 Women in Alabama Media 2019 by *Business Alabama* magazine. As special projects editor for Meredith Corporation in Birmingham, she produces newsstand special edition issues for popular brands including *Food & Wine*, *Cooking Light*, and *Weight Watchers*.



**Andrea Snyder**, chief creative officer of Urban Cookhouse, was named a 2019 Woman Making Waves by AMD Branding for her leadership across Alabama, her support of other local businesses, and her dedication to empowering other women around her.



Congratulations to **Anna Threadcraft**, RDN, LD, on her new position as Health and Well-Being Program Manager for the 86,000+ worldwide employees at Delta Air Lines.



Best wishes to **Angela Schmidt** as she follows her personal life plan with a move to Greenville, SC. If you are going to be traveling there, you will find her at Limoncello, an Italian restaurant with the Larkin Group, where she is chef de cuisine.



2019 LDEI Entrepreneur Grant Winner **Tanesha Sims-Summers**, founder/CEO at Naughty But Nice Kettle Corn Co., has been named to the *Birmingham Business Journal's* 2020 Top



40 Under 40. A current participant in our LDEI Emerging Women Entrepreneurs Mentoring Program, Tanesha is also "paying it back" as a sponsor of the second class of the Birmingham Promise apprenticeship program for a young woman who is a student in Birmingham City Schools.

**Mary-Frances Heck**, senior food editor at *Food & Wine*, has been named a finalist in two categories for the 2020 International Association of Culinary Professionals Cuisinart Awards. In the Culinary Television Series category, she and Josh Miller are recognized for their work on *F&W Cooks*. Her work on *Handbook* is nominated for the Food Section of *A Magazine Circulation* Over 500,000. Winners will be announced at the IACP Awards Ceremony on March 28.



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