



Les Dames d'Escoffier  
INTERNATIONAL



Founded in 2013

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

Winter 2020

## President's Note

As I participated in the LDEI President's call last week, I realized how far our chapter in Birmingham has come and how proud I am of it!

There were presidents from chapters in London, Paris, Philly, Seattle, South Florida, and San Antonio, just to name a few. It was fascinating to hear about the creativity in having virtual programs for members during these ongoing Covid times.

One of the most intriguing programs from the South Florida chapter was a Zoom call with a Champagne vintner in France. They then created a promotion for four French restaurants with a special prix fixe menu for curbside which brought in \$6,000 to the restaurant community. I hope to get more information on that event from the South Florida chapter.

Needless to say, I was thrilled to report on our fall fundraiser, Champagne & Fried Chicken, which raised more money for scholarships and grants than last year's in-person event.

It still warms my heart to have seen our entire chapter—old, young, new, and veterans—coming together working side by side

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## Merci, Y'all! Our fundraiser was a delicious and profitable pivot



By Susan Swagler  
& Kathy G Mezrano

When faced with a global pandemic that made our annual in-person fundraiser impossible to pull off, our Birmingham chapter didn't back down. Instead, we came together and reimaged our event in a way that was safe and fun and profitable.

Our October 18 Champagne & Fried Chicken, chaired by Dames Kathy G. Mezrano, Kay Reed, and Barbara Kenyon, netted our chapter an impressive profit. We sold 210 picnic baskets and 50 cocktail kits. We offered everything from chocolate cakes to cooking classes in our online store. We

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## Fundraiser, continued from page 1

gathered enough \$100 gift certificates to some of Birmingham's most beloved restaurants to create two different raffles.

As chapter president Kathy G. says, "We more than exceeded our goal, even during Covid, and I think we all had fun doing it!"

Kathy G. continues, "Words can hardly express the gratitude and joy of seeing our entire chapter make our Southern Soirée 2020, Champagne & Fried Chicken, such an amazing success! I couldn't be more proud to see our entire chapter working side by side producing one of our most memorable fundraisers to date!"

"Congratulations to all!! Thank you to the co-chairs and all of the team leaders who took charge and made this event come together. And a heartfelt welcome to our newest members who stepped up immediately, producing our vegetarian option and cocktail kit station. It was wonderful watching you take on responsibility right out of the



gate! ... You're already role models representing all the ideals of Les Dames! It was wonderful seeing everyone getting to know each other and working side by side."

A few days before the event, Dame Barbara Kenyon led a team doing advance work on the baskets. And Dame Charbett Cauthen gathered the last of our raffle items. The day of our event, Dame Debbie Mar greeted the volunteer Dames and handed out masks. Dames Martha

Johnston and Rachel West put out sponsor signs, and Dame Leigh Sloss-Corra took care of last-minute logistics.

While Dames Cristina Almanza, Laura Newman, and Rachael Roberts set up the cocktail kit tent outside, Dame Jan Gautro led a team creating bouquets of beautiful dahlias donated by Dame Deborah Stone.

In our larger working space, donated by Pepper Place, kitchen

*Assembling the baskets was a true group effort. Dames worked together to package 210 baskets, prep the flowers, and organize the cocktails and Champagne.*

*All fundraiser images by Joe DeSciose*

team leader Dame Kay Reed and dozens of Dames put together our baskets filled with new potato salad with shallot vinaigrette and fresh herbs by Dame Kathy G. Mezrano, and a green salad with organic fall vegetables and dried fruits prepared by Dame Ashley McMakin, using produce from Dame Margaret Ann Snow of Snow's Bend Farm and Southern Organics. We had corn muffins by Dame Brittany Cheatham, pastry chef at Satterfield's, and biscuits from Dame Jennifer Yarbrough of Crestline Bagel Co. Each basket had French sable cookies prepared by Dame Becky Satterfield as well as East-aboga Honey and fresh pears and cheese. We featured Southern fried chicken made with the help of our friend Louis Graffeo.

A vegetarian frittata, prepared by Dame Joy Smith, offered a delicious second option. Outside, Dame Erin Isbell efficiently handled the traffic along with Dame Rebel Negley (making great use of her bullhorn!); Erin seemed to be everywhere at once—the ultimate problem solver!



Our friendly greeters, led by Dame Joy Smith, and the sign-in team, led by Dame Sonthe Burge, made our customers feel welcome as they drove past the beautifully arranged Champagne tent, headed by Dame Idie Hastings, to the market basket tent (with basket runners organized by Dame Kate Nicholson) to the flower tent and cocktail tent and finally the store pick-up tent, led by Dame Gia McCollister.

Making this drive-by pick-up more of an "event," Kathy G. created a picnic setting with

tables covered in cheerful blue and white gingham cloth. A live band was on hand to entertain the Dames and guests.

"Seeing our veterans, new members, and Dames from all the years come together makes our chapter one of the very best in the LDEI family," said Kathy G. "I think we may see other chapters following the pattern of our event. I've already sent the format with details to a Dame in the Phoenix chapter."

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producing one of our most memorable fundraisers to date.....and having fun doing it. Congratulations to all!

Our market basket with curbside pickup event may become a model for other chapters to follow as well. At the fundraiser wrap-up meeting, we read glowing reviews from our corporate sponsors as well as other guests that bought the baskets. It was unanimous that we follow this same format for next year with a few tweaks.

As far as programs, Rebecca Williamson and Mary Esther Carpenter have taken over for Jan Gautro and are already planning some events so we can stay connected.

I've contacted the Community Food Bank of Central Alabama and agreed that LDEI Birmingham will participate in packing boxes at their location, 107 Walter Davis Drive, 35209, during the holidays. Our initial service day was Monday, November 23 and we packed more than 400 boxes in two hours! We did this several years ago, and all thought it was most gratifying to help feed our community before the holidays. Please look for emails with additional opportunities to get together and serve this holiday season.

In these still-uncertain times, I do hope we can stay connected and keep serving our community with a positive spirit. With such a powerful group of women, let's keep the momentum going! I wish you all wonderful and safe holidays with your families and loved ones!

With love and gratitude,  
Kathy G Mezrano

# Sponsors

## Jeroboam Level:

- Alabama Power
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- Stock Yards of Birmingham
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## Bottle Level:

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- What Chefs Want
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- Warren Averett
- Stewart Dansby/ Colite Technologies
- Sloss Sisters
- Canary Gallery & Gus's Hotdogs
- Greg Abrams Seafood
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## Additional Sponsors:

- The Roberts Group
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# Donations

- Southern Organics: greens
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- Queen's Park: Geo Dickell 12 cocktail
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- Snow's Bend Organics
- Kathy G's Catering: French potato salad
- IZ Café & Catering
- Crestline Bagel Co.: biscuits
- Satterfield's: sable cookies + corn muffins
- Ashley Mac's: salads
- Sorelle: fritatta
- BDA Farm: eggs
- Chester's Chicken: 40# chicken coating
- Char-House Foods: fried chicken
- Eastaboga Bee Company: wildflower honey



## Fundraiser, continued from page 3

The hard work started long before October 18, with Martha Johnston, Idie Hastings, and Rachel West heading up our sponsorship committee, which brought in nearly \$40,000. All of this will go directly into our designated scholarship and grant account. Two of our brand-new Dames, LaCrista Hutchinson and Stacey Craig, brought in \$5,000 and \$1,000 sponsors respectively.

Dame Rachel West, our “rock-star,” handled PR and signage and worked with Dames Sidney Fry and

Ashley McMakin on social media. Dames Jennifer Yarbrough and Susan Swagler ran the online store, which with baskets; cocktail kits; raffle tickets; and Dame-related items, foods, and experiences, had nearly equal to sponsorship dollars.

We made more money than last year, and that means our scholarship and grant giving can continue uninterrupted. We also have funds for our general operating budget as well as money to put toward building a future endowment.

Nearly our entire membership (some 68 Dames!) showed up on

the day of our event, masks on, and ready to work. Each person who drove through our line of tents was greeted by enthusiastic Dames and thanked over and over. Our smiles were hidden beneath our Merci, Y'all! masks, but customers knew exactly how much we appreciate them.

Kathy pointed out that our inboxes were filled the next day with “rave reviews from guests who drove by and picked up their Champagne, baskets, flowers, and cocktail kits. People felt like they attended a fun street party!”

Here are a few of those comments:

“I wanted to congratulate you on a very successful fundraising in this difficult period. The fried chicken Champagne dinner was not only a hit but was delicious! It was good to see so many Dames participating. Have a great week.”

—Porter McCollister,  
Montgomery Environmental

“I thought you all did a wonderful job with the event! I know you had to pivot and try something new, but it was awesome! I went home and picked Morgan up to deliver the baskets after the kiddos woke up, and she LOVED the presentation and flowers! One went to an elderly neighbor across the street, and the other to an old client that is recently widowed. Really brightened up their day! Thank you for letting us be a part of it ... Looking forward to next year!”

—Drew Gearhart, Warren Averett

Allison Cambre, from the *Birmingham Business Journal*, wrote to thank us for “such a lovely experience... First off, it was such a surprise to see so many familiar masked faces! ... Second, I had planned to take the basket to my boyfriend’s house and have dinner with him while watching a movie. When I got there and unpacked the basket, we were both so surprised at how fabulous it was ... the food was so scrumptious! ... the flowers were such a lovely touch ... the Spotify play list! ... instead of watching a movie, we took everything out to the patio, added candles and turned on Spotify. It is the little things that make the difference, and you all certainly did make a difference for me.”



The camaraderie we shared that day was unlike anything our chapter has experienced. It was something special that we all recognized and appreciated.

Dame Pardis Stitt wrote to Kathy G. that evening: “Frank went on and on about the chicken. And the potato salad was outstanding. The pick-up was so organized—kudos to you and the Dames who worked with you on a flawless event!”

Dame Sherron Goldstein wrote: “What an exceptional day. Starting with everyone present working together. Getting to know one another. Then the car parade with smiles and thank yous. Rebel topped it off, and we celebrated success. What could be better!!! Thank You All.”

Dame Stefanie Maloney sent this to the membership: “What a wonderful event! I loved seeing everyone turning out for this event and working together to make it a success. So glad to be a

member of an organization of strong, intelligent, incredible women in the culinary field! You bring a smile to my face. And I loved meeting all our new members and putting faces with the names of so many members that I hadn’t yet had the opportunity to meet. Thanks to each and every one of you who contributed your time and energy to this fabulous event!”

And, finally, with an email subject line that read “Rebel on the Bullhorn at Every Event,” Dame Geri-Martha O’Hara shared this: “What a wonderful event!! Thank you to the lead team! So much hard work that went on behind the scenes, it’s an honor to work alongside each of you. Us youngins better start taking notes! It was good for the soul to see everyone!”



# Meet Our New Members!

Our chapter gained 12 new members in August 2020. Here, get to know the first four of these extraordinary women a little better. The other eight will be featured in the Spring 2021 newsletter.

## Anna Theoktisto

**Place of birth:** Gainesville, Florida  
**College/professional school(s) attended, major, degree earned:**

University of Florida (Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Education and Communication, Minor in Packaging Science), Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, NY (Associates in Culinary Arts)

**Current position:** Recipe developer/ tester at Meredith Corporation

**How did you get your start?**

I interned at *Bon Appetit* magazine in NY while in culinary school. I always knew I wanted to go into the journalism side of the food



industry. After I graduated, I got my first job as a recipe developer and food stylist at Hoffman Media here in

Birmingham!

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

I love the people I work with. We are such a creative powerhouse—it’s incredibly refreshing to bounce ideas and brainstorm with such an amazing group of people.

**What does success look like to you?** Being happy is success.

**If you could plan your last meal, what would it be?** I LOVE linguine and clam sauce (the white sauce not the red...)...so that’s what it would be. Maybe with a hunk of garlic bread to sop up the sauce.

**If you had one week free of all obligations and \$5,000, where would you go and what would you do?** I would go to Greece. I’ve always wanted to go—maybe stay in some Airbnbs, eat some amazing food, and drink a lot of wine.

**Bonus:** During quarantine, we have helped foster 3 puppies. So rewarding to help care/heal these babies before they reach their furever home.

## April McClung

**Place of birth:** Miami, Florida  
**College/professional school(s) attended, major, degree earned:**

University of Florida: B.S. Management; Barry University: MBA

**Current position:** Owner of Emily’s Heirloom Pound Cakes, LLC

**How did you get your start?**

The business started as a fundraiser where we used our Grandmother’s hundred-year-old pound cake recipe to raise over \$14k to send one of our sons to 7 countries in Europe for 20 days and the other son to China for 17 days as Student Ambassadors during the summer of 2014.

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

I enjoy being an inspiration by



spreading the Gospel through my personal testimony, the flexibility to create, and bringing joy/happiness to

others who experience my products.

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

Success to me is creating a legacy for my sons, being able to enjoy the life I’ve created, and continuing to make a difference to those who come in contact with me.

**If you could plan your last meal, what would it be?** This is hard because I’m such a foodie! I would probably create an elaborate charcuterie board that includes sushi, steak, lobster, shrimp, assorted cheeses/veggies, and red wine.

**If you had one week free of all obligations and \$5,000, where would you go and what would you do?** I would go where the water is a beautiful bluish green, scenery is tranquil and peaceful, sun shining bright. I would be a TOTAL lady of leisure taking long walks and laying out on the beach with unlimited bottles of my favorite wines and foods! It would be great to have friends to dine and fellowship with during the evening.

**Bonus!** I love beautiful, colorful, DELICIOUS foods. There is something so peaceful about creating. I am also a SCRABBLE QUEEN! It is not uncommon for me to have upwards of 10 games going on simultaneously from my phone!

## Jasmine Smith

**Place of birth:** I was born in Livingston, New Jersey, but raised in Austin, Texas

**College/professional school(s) attended, major, degree earned:** I attended Johnson & Wales University—Denver and majored in Culinary Nutrition with a duo concentration in Clinical Dietetics and Food Science.

**Current position:** I am an Assistant Recipe Developer & Tester at Meredith Corporation; I create original recipes for various brands and test recipes from outsourced chefs/culinarians.

**What do you enjoy about your current position?** I love that every week is different. One week might be strictly baking, another week seafood cookery, the next week may be focused on cocktail recipes. I’m



never bored; I am continuously learning, honing my skills, and allowed to be fully creative. As for the

industry, I love providing easy but delicious recipes for the everyday home cooks. I think as a recipe developer, it’s important that we help educate and share innovative and efficient ways to cook at home.

**What are some causes you care about?** Food deserts, food distribution, food waste.

Refugees. I want to do more work with helping refugees at any point on their journey. I could not imagine having to leave my life behind; their resilience is inspiring, and I’d just like to help in any way I can.

**If you could plan your last meal, what would it be?** I have West Indian roots, so my last meal would be a traditional Caribbean brunch with saltfish, sweet plantains, cod fish fritters, coconut bread, sorrel drink, and super-ripe mangos.

**If you had one week free of all obligations and \$5,000, where would you go and what would you do?** I’d travel to Morocco, eat my way through the country and explore their various markets.

**Of all the places you’ve traveled, which was your favorite?**

Ecuador! I went for a couple of weeks with my close friend. We visited every region, minus the Galapagos (that will need to be a trip of its own). We trekked through the Amazon Rainforest and the Andes Mountains, visited the big surf towns, straddled the equator, and took a boat trip along the Napo River to visit a few cocoa farms.

## Joy Smith

**Place of birth:** Grosse Pointe, Michigan

**College/professional school(s) attended, major, degree earned:** UAB, B.S. in Psychology

**Current position:** Owner and Creative Chef of Sorelle catering company

**How did you get your start?** I got started in the kitchen at home when I was young then held various positions in the restaurant industry starting at 16. I started my own catering company in 2016.



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

I enjoy meeting new people and seeing them enjoy the food

I have prepared, how it positively impacts their lives, and saving the day with dinner!

**What does success look like to you?** Continuous learning along with a happy balance between work and home. A healthy account balance / financial bottom line.

**If you could plan your last meal, what would it be?** I have many favorites but will go with tomato salad made up of several varieties of heirloom tomatoes and tomato pie!

**If you had one week free of all obligations and \$5,000, where would you go and what would you do?** Go to Europe with my husband, travel all around, and try as many different foods as possible at every turn.

**Bonus!** I love miniature things and enjoy gardening, camping and hiking in the woods.

# Seasonal Sweets: Dames share their favorite holiday dessert recipes—and some memories, too

compiled and edited  
by Donna Cornelius

The best holiday desserts are seasoned not just with sugar and spices but with a heaping cup of happy memories. Four Dames who are expert bakers have shared their favorite festive treats with us—along with the recollections that make these creations extra-special.

**Gia McCollister:  
Tradition with a Twist**

Gia’s family gives the holidays an international flavor.

“Our Christmas meals change every two years when all of us get together at once,” she said. “We love to cook ethnic meals for the occasion. A different country is picked every time. We search for that country’s typical holiday meal and cook around their tradition.”

Another favorite Christmas custom is a cookie bar.

“I try to bake four to five different kinds of cookies that are always displayed in our kitchen,” Gia said. And if all those treats weren’t sweet enough, Gia also bakes sticky buns for breakfast on Christmas Day.

**Gingerbread Bundt Cake**  
2½ cups all-purpose flour  
2 tablespoons gingerbread spice  
½ teaspoon salt  
¼ teaspoon baking soda  
1 teaspoon baking powder  
¾ cup unsalted butter  
1½ cups brown sugar, packed  
2 large eggs  
½ cup molasses  
1 cup water

*For the glaze:*  
1/3 cup rum or water  
½ teaspoon gingerbread spice  
¾ cup granulated sugar

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Lightly grease a 10- to 12-cup Bundt pan.
2. Whisk together the dry ingredients. In a separate bowl, beat together the butter and sugar until fluffy. Add the eggs one at the time. Stir in the molasses. Add the flour mixture in three additions alternately with water. Mix just until smooth.
3. Bake the cake for 55 to 65 minutes or until a cake tester comes out clean.
4. While the cake is baking, make the glaze by stirring together all the ingredients. Set aside.
5. Remove the cake from the oven, cool it in the pan for 10 minutes, and then turn it out onto a rack. Brush the cake with the glaze.

**Laura Zapalowski:  
Eyes on the Pies**

Laura’s oatmeal pecan pie is an updated version of a family favorite. “My grandmother was a working woman and didn’t do much of the everyday cooking, but she still made a lot of food and desserts for holidays,” Laura said. “I believe she started adding oats to her pecan pies to save money when times were tight. It gives a nice nutty texture and flavor to the pie without having to use as many nuts.”

Laura said her mom has always made homemade pie crusts and won several prizes for her pies at local fairs.

“Needless to say, there were always numerous pies at our Thanksgiving and Christmas tables,” she said. A handful of years ago, Laura developed a healthy version of the oatmeal pecan pie for *Cooking Light*, and it was featured on the magazine’s 2006 Thanksgiving cover.

“Since we purchased Homewood Gourmet in 2010, we always make a version of this pie during the holiday season,” she said. “I’ve added



Gia McCollister’s Gingerbread Bundt Cake

some butter and eggs back into the version that we make at the restaurant, so it’s a little different from the *Cooking Light* one. All of our crusts are still homemade by my mom, but you can certainly use a refrigerated piecrust if you prefer. My mom makes around 70 piecrusts for us for Thanksgiving Day.”

**Oatmeal Pecan Pie**

1 cup packed dark brown sugar  
1 cup light corn syrup  
2/3 cup old-fashioned oats  
½ cup chopped pecans

¼ cup butter, melted  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
¼ teaspoon almond extract  
¼ teaspoon salt  
3 large eggs, lightly beaten  
1 (8-inch) unbaked pie shell

1. Preheat oven to 325°F.
2. Combine brown sugar and remaining ingredients, stirring well with a whisk. Pour evenly into prepared crust. Bake for 50 minutes or until center is set. Cool completely on a wire rack.

continued



**Pam Lolley: Triple Treat**

Pam’s dessert combines three delicious treats: pumpkin pie, pecan pie, and cheesecake. She developed this for *Southern Living*’s November 2011 issue—after it got the seal of approval from her son, Drew. “He is a huge cheesecake fan, and after one taste his eyes rolled back in his head and he told me this was going to be at every Thanksgiving from now on,” Pam said. “So, it has been. You know what us moms do for our babies!”

Try out Pam’s recipe to win the coveted Mom of the Year award from your family, too.

**Pumpkin Pecan Cheesecake**

2 cups graham cracker crumbs  
1/3 cup finely chopped pecans  
5 tablespoons butter, melted  
3 tablespoons light brown sugar  
4 (8-oz.) packages cream cheese, softened  
1 cup granulated sugar  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
4 large eggs  
1½ cups canned pumpkin  
1½ tablespoons lemon juice  
Praline topping (recipe follows)  
Garnishes: Coarsely chopped pecan pie-glazed pecans (recipe follows), fresh sage leaves

1. Preheat oven to 325°F. Stir together first 4 ingredients in a bowl until well blended. Press mixture on bottom and 1½ inches up sides of a 9-inch springform pan. Bake 8 to 10 minutes or until lightly browned.  
2. Beat cream cheese and next 2 ingredients at medium speed with a heavy-duty electric stand mixer until blended and smooth. Add eggs, 1 at a time, beating just until blended after each addition. Add pumpkin and lemon juice, beating until blended. Pour batter into prepared crust. (Pan will be very full.)

3. Bake for 1 hour to 1 hour and 10 minutes or until almost set. Turn oven off. Let cheesecake stand in oven, with door closed, 15 minutes. Remove cheesecake from oven, and gently run a knife around outer edge of cheesecake to loosen from sides of pan. (Do not remove sides of pan.) Cool completely on a wire rack (about 1 hour). Cover and chill 8-24 hours.  
4. Remove sides and bottom of pan, and transfer cheesecake to a serving plate. Prepare Praline Topping; immediately pour slowly over top of cheesecake, spreading to within ¼-inch of edge. Garnish, if desired.

*For the praline topping:*

1 cup firmly packed brown sugar  
1/3 cup whipping cream  
¼ cup butter  
1 cup powdered sugar, sifted  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1. Bring first 3 ingredients to a boil in a 1-qt. saucepan over medium heat, stirring often. Boil, stirring occasionally, 1 minute; remove from heat. Gradually whisk in powdered sugar and vanilla until smooth. Let stand 5 minutes, whisking occasionally. Use immediately.

*For the Pecan Pie-Glazed Pecans:*

2 cups pecan halves  
½ cup firmly packed light brown sugar  
6 tablespoons dark corn syrup

1. Stir together pecan halves, light brown sugar, and dark corn syrup in a small bowl. Spread mixture in a lightly greased aluminum foil-lined jelly-roll pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 12 to 15 minutes or until glaze thickens, stirring every 4 minutes. Spread in a single layer on wax paper; cool completely, separating pecans as they cool. (For the pretti-

est garnish, leave some in clusters.) Store in an airtight container at room temperature.

**Anna Theoktisto:  
A Real Bread Winner**

Anna shared this recipe in the December 2017 issue of *Taste of the South* magazine.  
“I grew up eating this every Christmas morning,” Anna said. “It kind of reminds me of a challah studded with candied fruit and spiced lightly with cardamom. I love to eat this toasted and slathered with butter.” She said the bread also freezes wonderfully.

**Swedish Christmas Bread**

Makes 2 loaves

1 cup plus 1 teaspoon whole milk, divided  
½ cup unsalted butter  
½ cup warm water (105° to 110°)  
2 tablespoons active dry yeast  
5½ cups all-purpose flour, divided  
½ cup sugar  
2 teaspoons kosher salt  
1 teaspoon ground cardamom  
3 large eggs, divided  
¾ cup candied cherries, chopped  
⅔ cup raisins  
⅔ cup chopped candied citron  
Whipping Cream Glaze (recipe follows)

1. In a small saucepan, heat 1 cup milk over medium-high heat, stirring frequently, just until bubbles form around edges of pan. Remove from heat; add butter. Let cool for 15 minutes.  
2. In a small bowl, stir together ½ cup warm water and yeast. Let stand until mixture is foamy, about 5 minutes.  
3. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, combine 5 cups flour, sugar, salt, and

cardamom. With mixer on low speed, add 2 eggs, milk mixture, and yeast mixture, beating until a dough forms. Switch to the dough hook attachment; beat until dough is smooth and elastic, about 7 minutes, adding remaining ½ cup flour as needed. Add cherries, raisins, and citron, beating to combine.  
4. Spray a large bowl with cooking spray. Place dough in bowl, turning to grease top. Cover and let stand in a warm, draft-free place (75°) until doubled in size, about 1 hour.  
5. On a lightly floured surface, punch dough down, and divide in half. Divide each half into 3 equal pieces. Roll each piece into a 12-inch rope. Braid 3 ropes together, pinching ends to seal. Repeat with remaining 3 ropes.  
6. Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper. Place loaves 3 inches apart on prepared pan. Spray loaves with cooking spray; loosely cover with plastic wrap. Let stand until doubled in size, about 45 minutes.  
7. Preheat oven to 350°F. In a small bowl, whisk together remaining 1 egg and remaining 1 teaspoon milk. Lightly brush over bread.  
8. Bake until golden brown, about 35 minutes, covering with foil during last 5 minutes of baking to prevent excess browning. Let cool on pan for 10 minutes. Remove from pan, and let cool completely on wire racks. Drizzle with Whipping Cream Glaze.

*Whipping Cream Glaze*

In a medium bowl, whisk together 1½ cups confectioners’ sugar, ½ cup whipping cream, ½ teaspoon vanilla extract, and ⅛ teaspoon kosher salt until smooth. Drizzle glaze over cooled loaves.

# Another Success at the Les Dames Takeover at Pepper Place



Left to right: Aimee Castro, Cristina Almanza, Kathy G. Mezrano, LaCrista Hutchinson, and Susan Swagler shared information about LDEI and sold salsa, flan, ham bread, and more for Latin Food Week.

**By Leigh Sloss-Corra**

This is the fourth year that the Birmingham chapter of LDEI has teamed up with the Market at Pepper Place during the month of September to shine a spotlight on top women in food. During the takeover in years past, different LDEI members took turns hosting live cooking demos at the Market each Saturday.

This year, the chef demo program was canceled because of the pandemic, so Market Executive Director and Dame Leigh Sloss-Corra adapted the “takeover” to suit the new Covid-safe functionality of the Market.

Instead of owning the stage for a 30-minute cooking demo every

week, Dames were given a tent and a place to sell their own food items alongside other market vendors from 7 a.m. to noon every Saturday for five weeks. Each week focused on a different theme or cuisine, so that a wider range of Dames were able to get involved.

The themes included: Eat Healthy, Live Well Week (dietitians and healthy food experts), Latin Food Week, Mediterranean Food Week, Sweet Treats Week, and BBQ Week.

Food items and cookbooks were sold “bake sale-style,” and Dames had the opportunity to promote the organization and the upcoming Champagne & Fried Chicken Fundraiser in October. And boy was it a success! Not only did more Dames than ever participate

*continued*

and volunteer week after week [including brand new members] but proceeds from items sold raised over \$6,000!

Even though the Market's attendance has been significantly lower since Covid-19 hit, the shoppers who stopped by the Dames' tent were thrilled to buy and learn about the organization. And Dames who participated were delighted to be outside, and interacting with each other and the public in such a positive "normal" way.

The camaraderie that developed had a positive impact on the October fundraiser as well. Dames who got to know each other during the takeover were more motivated to call on one another and team up again to support the event a few weeks later.

Net result? The fundraiser had 98% member participation and raised a record amount. For the past several years, in local and national press, Birmingham has become known as a "foodie city." With Dames in the Market at Pepper Place spotlight every year, that reputation will only strengthen and the women will be leading the way.



Top: Registered dietitians Anne Cain and Rosemary Dallam at Eat Healthy, Live Well Week.  
Middle: Betsy McAtee at BBQ Week  
Far left: Maureen Holt, Stefanie Maloney, and Barbara Kenyon at Sweet Treats Week.  
Left: A fundraiser logistics planning meeting at Sweet Treats week.

# Independent Restaurant Coalition Leaders Lobby to Save an Industry in Distress

By Leigh Sloss-Corra

2020 has been a devastating year, and though the independent food and beverage industry has been hard hit, it has received little to no bailout support from government and other agencies.

With CDC and health department regulations constantly changing, independent restaurateurs and bar owners have struggled to adapt and stay afloat in conditions that have been almost impossible. Big chains and franchises have fared better during the pandemic, gaining access to PPP and other federal support, while many independents across the country have been forced to close, one by one.

In an interview, Dame Amanda Cohen, chef/owner of Dirt Candy, a vegetarian restaurant in NYC, said independent restaurants never had a trade group or a mechanism to lobby, and realized that if they didn't team up, the entire industry might disappear.

So with help from the James Beard Foundation, the Independent Restaurant Coalition (IRC) was established. It currently represents 500,000 restaurants and bars, or three-fourths of the industry.

Birmingham-based, James Beard Award-winning chef Frank Stitt, husband and business partner of Dame Pardis Stitt, is on the group's leadership team with Cohen.

Birmingham is grateful for Stitt's support and efforts to work in this

way for the greater good.

The IRC is asking the federal government to establish a \$120 billion fund for grants that would allow independent restaurants to make up for revenue they've lost. This fund would generate up to \$271 billion in economic returns, providing the resources and support needed to the difficult months and years ahead.

Here are a few facts that the IRC has compiled to make their case:

- The Independent restaurant industry contributes \$760 billion to the U.S. economy.
- 11 million people are directly employed by independent restaurants, with 5 million more workers up and down the supply chain.
- Restaurants lost over \$220 billion in the 2nd quarter of this year.
- According to reports at the end of October, 2.1 million restaurant workers are out of a job, with more expected as cold weather outdoor dining becomes impossible.
- 70% of independent restaurant owners report having over \$50,000 in new debt.

As Dames, we are acutely aware of these struggles. Many of us have had to lay off workers, close locations indefinitely, take out loans we couldn't afford, and go to extremes to get customers back and to cover basic expenses.

With recent virus numbers surging in the midst of the distress, the IRC offers a beacon of hope. By

teaming up and working together toward a common goal, this committed group of leaders now have a chance of being heard and achieving meaningful change that will benefit all of us. As of November 6, 214 House members and 49 senators have pledged support of the bipartisan RESTAURANTS Act. Our nation survived a troubled election, and there is time now to renew the focus and get this bill through. We are a network of powerful, organized women—we can help too!

- Here's what we can do:
- write to our representatives at the federal, state, and local level, calling for support of the bill;
  - join and donate to the IRC;
  - patronize local, independent restaurants and bars whenever possible in whatever ways we can;
  - share on social media and with professionals and friends the urgency of this crisis;
  - support each other, listen and help when and where we can.

It's the holiday season and we have so much to be grateful for. If we join forces now and get through this together, we can go out and toast at our favorite spots when it's over. If we don't work together, our lives could be dramatically different and a lot less fun. Thanks to the leaders in the IRC who are fighting for our survival and happiness. Let us hope they can succeed.

# Behind the Scenes with Dame Ana Plana

compiled and edited  
by Donna Cornelius

Ana Plana has spent two decades in the food business—and now, she’s sharing what she’s learned with college students.

Ana got her start in cooking by working in her family’s Miami catering company, Fete Cuisine. She furthered her experience in the kitchens of restaurants like Blue Door at Miami’s Delano Hotel and at Sandestin’s Elephant Walk. After graduating from Florida International University and then from Johnson & Wales University, she moved to Seattle to work for Lowell-Hunt Catering.

Her career as a culinary educator began when she returned home to the beautiful Florida city of Coral Gables, where she grew up and has now taken her to what’s known as the Loveliest Village of the Plain: Auburn. There, she’s drawing on her background as a caterer, restaurant chef and passionate advocate for improving our food system to help Auburn University create its new Culinary Science program.

## How did working with your mom at Fete Cuisine shape your career?

Back in the day, we cooked at our house. My mom grew the business, so we eventually moved it to a warehouse which we converted into a kitchen. I was the owner’s daughter, so I felt I had to justify myself there. I went to Florida International University for an undergraduate degree in marketing and international business. We didn’t have money to advertise, so I wanted to learn about marketing. Then I went to culinary school—again, to justify my spot in



the company. I was in the second graduating class at Johnson & Wales’ Miami campus.

Looking back, as a little girl I’d love it when we had people over, passing around trays of food, pleasing others. I think every chef or anyone in the hospitality field likes making people happy.

**How was working in restaurant kitchens different from working at a catering company?** To be honest, I enjoyed catering more. The clients, venues, and menus are always different; you’re not making the same steak dinner every night.

Catering does have challenges, however. You have to load everything up, unload, do the event, and then load and unload again. You have to be innovative, too. For example, we once had to rent a tent and create a kitchen out of a six-foot barbecue grill for a big event at a museum.

**What are some of the most important things you learned at culinary school?** I absorbed every single opportunity that was given to me by the school. In the early 1990s, I got to work with some very prom-

inent chefs: Emeril Lagasse, Larry Forgione, and Food Network’s “Two Hot Tamales” stars, Susan Fenigar and Mary Sue Milliken. Johnson & Wales gave me the chance to work at different events. I might be peeling 50 pounds of potatoes one day and setting up tables for 500 people the next.

**You worked at events for some high-profile corporate clients when you were with Lowell-Hunt Catering in Seattle—Microsoft, Nestle, Boeing and top wineries like Chateau Ste. Michelle & DeLille. How did catering those types of events differ from “regular” catering jobs?** Catering for people like Bill Gates helps you pay more attention to what a big impact these types of clients have. While you want to make everyone feel like a VIP, high-profile clients’ voices are much louder and reach a lot of people. The room for error is small. You have to make sure you’re on your toes. If someone like Bill Gates says, “Don’t use that company,” then you’re done.

**What led you to go into culinary education?** When I moved back

to Florida from Seattle in 2007, my mom was still catering. The company had put a lot of capital into opening a gourmet store and cooking school in Coral Gables’ Merrick Park, an upscale outdoor shopping mall. But that year, the recession and two hurricanes hit. Coral Gables has strict permitting regulations so we couldn’t open until the summer—and summers in Miami are dead. We ended up losing the store.

There was a high school a block away, and the culinary teacher there came to see our store before it closed. It turned out that she had also been to Johnson & Wales. I talked with her and found out she got off every day at 2:30 in the afternoon, which really appealed to me because my sons were in first grade and kindergarten at the time.

I got hired by the public school system there and started teaching. I loved it! I could be with my two boys and stay in the food world, too. I’ve never looked back.

**What brought you to Auburn University?** I was working as an adjunct instructor at FIU with Dr. Mark Traynor. We got the opportunity to help start and build the Culinary Science program at Auburn. The program will soon be moving to a brand-new building with a student-run restaurant. It’s exciting to be in on the ground floor of this.

## What classes do you teach at AU, and what lessons do you want to make sure your students learn?

I teach Culinary Fundamentals in the summer and Food Production, which is a junior and senior level class where the students build toward a final event or dinner. As more students come into the program, we’ll be adding classes in baking, pastry and global cuisine. We

also plan to invite the community in for classes later on.

**Along with teaching, you’re working on your Ph.D. in hospitality management at Auburn. Where do you see your career going from here?** The research I have to do to obtain this degree will allow me to be a better advocate for improving our food system and to be a better teacher. Having 20 years of field experience plus a Ph.D. will help me make our program’s faculty and staff stronger.

**You’ve earned a lot of prestigious awards. Which ones are especially important to you?** There are several that have meant the most, including the James Beard Foundation’s Robert Rauschenberg Residence on Captiva Island, Florida, in 2018. This summer, I attended the JBF’s Chefs Boot Camp for Policy and Change, which was held virtually. It taught us how to be better advocates—how to have a bigger impact through social media and how to effectively approach and express our ideas to senators or other decision-makers.

Another was training at the Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture. Only 15 people from across the country were selected for this. These experiences made me a stronger advocate for sustainability in food and gave me valuable information to bring back to my students.

## What foods do you most often cook for yourself at home?

Right now, plant-based eating is a trend—but I think it’s going to be more than a trend. That’s the road I’m on now. I’m forcing myself to test and try out more plant-based dishes. The ways that animals are raised often means that you don’t get good quality. I’d rather have a more

expensive protein once a week or once a month and get a high quality product.

**If you go out to eat, what kinds of restaurants do you typically choose?** When I was a single mom to two teenaged boys—they’re 20 and 19 now—my grocery bill was sky high, so we didn’t go out a lot. When I do go out to eat, I like to see what restaurants people are talking about and why they’re talking about them. It irks me when a chef is really good but has empty tables, maybe for reasons like location or parking. My boys tell me to just enjoy my food and not critique the restaurant!

## What are some holiday traditions, including foods, that are important to you and your family?

I’m a first-generation American; my parents were Cuban. For the holidays, we do a whole pig cooked in la caja china (a pig-roasting box) or a pit. We normally have yucca with garlic, black beans, and a dessert called turrón—sort of like a sugar bark with nuts.

**How has being a member of LDEI’s Miami chapter and now of our chapter impacted you?** Some of the opportunities I’ve been given are due to Les Dames. When I applied for the Stone Barns program, I put my membership on my application, and the director mentioned that when I arrived.

I was connected to a headhunter several years ago, and it turned out she was a Dame, too. It was a different conversation then; I wasn’t just a client for her but a colleague.

I love that we’re all established in our field and that we help each other out a lot. I’ve found our Birmingham chapter to be a very warm, welcoming group. Les Dames changes things!

# Bring on the Bubbles for the Holidays

By Alexis Douglas,  
certified sommelier

Sparkling wines: luxurious, celebratory, fun...yet extremely versatile with food and often overlooked as an everyday sipper. What better way to end 2020 with a bang than to drink and gift bubbles! Since our fundraiser went so well this year featuring Champagne with Fried Chicken, I've chosen a few unique and exciting favorites that will be excellent for your intimate holiday gatherings and will make impressive gifts:

**The Fableist “Goose with the Golden Egg” Blanc de Blanc, Central Coast, California 2018 \$25.99. Classic Wine Co.** Made from 100% Chardonnay and aged on its lees for 8 months before release, this stunning value is made in the same method as Champagne. Totally dry, with bright apple and pear notes and refreshing acidity. Perfect with soft-ripened cheeses or with a big, pretty bow for a gift!



**Domaines Vinet “Maleco” Muscadet Brut, Loire Valley, France \$19.49. Classic Wine Co.** Muscadet, made from Melon de Bourgogne, is known as one of the best wines to match with oysters. This is a rare bubbly version that is incredibly fresh, vibrant, minerally and the perfect match for FRIED oysters. This is a new, tiny bottling (only 300 cases) and an excellent value: made in the same method as Champagne and aged “sur lie” for two years before release, which gives the wine complexity and richness.



**Left Coast Estate Brut Rosé, Willamette Valley, Oregon 2016 \$45.99. Hop City, Classic Wine Co., Greenwise** Every wine that Left Coast makes is delicious and well-made...and this limited bottling is no exception (only 180 cases were made). Made entirely from Pinot Meunier, it is delicate yet rich, with really pretty floral and honey notes. Excellent with salmon...smoked, sashimi, or roasted!



**Gonc Pét-Nat “Canvas” Blanc, Štajerska, Slovenia \$19.99. Classic Wine Co and Hop City.** From the mysteriously pretty label to the cloudiness to the flavor profile, this is a WILD wine. “Pét-nat” wines are currently the most trendy of the bubbly category, so they’re worth a try to literally see what all of the buzz is about. “Pétillant naturel” means “natural sparkling” and refers to how they’re made: bottled while they’re still fermenting! They are sealed with a crown cap, not a cork, and are more frothy than bubbly. Don’t let the sediment scare you...that’s the yeast still in action, creating incredible complexity right up until you pop the cap (make sure to ice them down thoroughly or the cap will fly off upon opening).

This version is made from 100% Pinot Blanc and aged 5 months in the bottle before release. Don’t miss the rosé also...it is made from Pinot Noir and dangerously drinkable!

**Pierre Gimonet “Special Club” Champagne, France 2012 \$98.99. Hop City** If you’re shopping for a gift at this price point, just keep walking past the big name Champagnes...especially if the recipient has great taste in food and wine. “Special Club” Champagnes are extremely sought-out and collectible, and offer undeniable quality. There are only 28 Champagne houses out of approximately 2,000 that are a member of this exclusive circle of growers, and Gimonet was a founding member. This wine screams for salmon tartare and should be served in a white wine glass vs. a classic flute. 100% Chardonnay.



**Collet Brut, Champagne, France \$34.99. Hop City** Hands-down the best value for true Champagne I’ve found in years. Impressive balance, texture, and complexity at this price point, with notes of pie crust, exotic fruit, and spices. Made from 50% Pinot Meunier (gives up-front fruit and richness), 30% Chardonnay and 20% Pinot Noir. Relatively unknown and with a pretty art-deco label, this bubbly would be a remarkable gift without breaking the bank, and an elegant match for rich amuses bouches.



# Scholarship Winner: An Entrepreneur in the Making

compiled and edited  
by Martha Johnston

Kayla Tyrrell, 2020 LDEI Scholarship Award Winner, is a nutrition and dietetics major at Samford University. She’s working to complete her M.S. and then plans to complete her internship and become a registered dietitian.

Although she has plans for a career focused on nutrition counseling for children and adults, her foray in entrepreneurship via Simply Pressed Juice Company may alter that course.

Kayla made time from her studies to share her story. Oh, and she remarked, “ I remain very grateful for the support and encouragement from LDEI Birmingham.” Kayla also joined the Dames at Pepper Place Market for our Latin Food Week in September.

## How and when did you come up with the idea for Simply Pressed



**Juice Company?** This idea all began when my cousin gifted me with his lightly used juicer in the summer of 2019. From there, I started creating my own recipes and began juicing in the fall semester. I received several requests from friends, acquaintances and employers for juice. Realizing how important convenience was for busy students and multitasking moms, I had the idea to create Simply Pressed as a fun way to incorporate a healthy boost into the fast-paced lifestyle.

**Simply Pressed Juice Company** was officially launched on February 9, 2020, embodying my passion for creative nutrition, quality, and convenience. My business supports the community nutritionally by providing products that increase an individual’s fruit and vegetable intake

**How does it work?** Simply Pressed Juice Company provides fresh, cold-pressed juice for individuals who are

seeking quality nutrition and convenience. Our vibrant products are made with non GMO, quality ingredients using only whole foods, free of all preservatives. Adding to our quality products is our quality service. Orders can be placed through text or Instagram and paid for using Venmo or cash. All orders include a complimentary delivery service.

**Who are your customers and target market?** Simply Pressed Juice Company has chosen a niche market of Samford University college students/staff and members of the local community to launch its products.

**Is this a “short term” business or do you see a growth opportunity?** Being a sole proprietorship, I have intentionally kept my menu limited with a few seasonal specials. Following graduation, I definitely see the opportunity to expand not only my menu but also my customer base. I envision the possibility of expanding to a mobile unit that could service special events and potentially even become a brick-and-board juice cafe. Eventually, I would love to incorporate a children’s product line.

**How are you branding the products?** I label each product with my custom Simply Pressed logo.

**What is your product point of difference?** To differentiate my product from other similar store-bought products, I use all organic ingredients and provide freshly pressed juices with same-day delivery. In an effort to be eco-friendly, I offer my products served in glass bottles with return cash back options.

# .....Let’s Toast.....

**Ashley McMakin** was featured in the November 2020 issue of *Birmingham Christian Family* magazine. She shared how her faith has been essential to running her business and being a wife and mother not only during the Covid-19 crisis but also since the beginnings of her business in 2007.



**Cheryl Slocum**, recipe developer for an article in the November 2020 issue of *O Magazine*, was also highlighted in the Giving Thanks contributor page feature sharing what she is grateful for and how she shows it. Check out her holiday recipes starting on page 94. They are really tasty ways to use Thanksgiving leftovers.



**Idie Hastings** and Entrepreneur Award-winner Tanesha Sims-Summers were speakers at the *Birmingham Business Journal’s* Women’s Summit. They spoke on the Magic City Flavor Live Panel about the resilience in the culinary industry in Birmingham.



Ashley McMakin was featured in Birmingham Christian Family magazine. Here’s the link for the digital copy: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1FtF-pNI\\_zUXlB-k0ujQsfQx-vQYLfcdyk-0/view?usp=drivesdk](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1FtF-pNI_zUXlB-k0ujQsfQx-vQYLfcdyk-0/view?usp=drivesdk)



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