



Les Dames d'Escoffier
INTERNATIONAL



Founded in 2013

Ideibirmingham.org

Summer 2019

President's Note: About Passion and Being Enough

A few months ago, I went to an event called This Very Moment. It was organized by the City of Birmingham to discuss where this city (and the immediate area and even the nation) is at this very moment.

Mayor Randall Woodfin and journalist Jeff Johnson talked about race relations, government leadership, social media, public discourse and volunteerism. They talked about legacy organizations (like our own Les Dames chapter) and how we sustain them to serve those who will come after us.

When asked for a call to action, Johnson told the audience this:

- Figure out what you are passionate about.
- Find a place to put that passion to work.
- Know that what you have right now is enough.

Of course we, as a membership, share a passion for food-related things. Our specialties and talents vary wildly, but we come together for the table—in whatever form that takes.

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Scholarships and grants awarded!



Thanks to the success of last year's Southern Soirée, the Birmingham chapter was able to double the amount of scholarships and grants that were given out compared to the previous year. Many of our recipients were able to attend a scholarship reception at OvenBird to celebrate their achievements and honor the work that they do.



LDEI Bham Award Winners Announced

By Rosemary Dallam

Birmingham Dames and their guests gathered at OvenBird on April 25, to recognize the 2019 winners of our expanded \$25,000 Scholarship and Awards Program. All the Alabama community colleges and universities offering programs in our scope of practice were provided with information on the application process. In addition, Dames assisted at the 2019 State High School Culinary Arts Competition and visited several hospitality and management classes to increase our reach.

4-Year College/University Award Winners

- Rachel Kleman is a junior at the University of Alabama majoring in hospitality management. Her goal is to become a corporate event planner. She is from Franklin, TN, and has a GPA of 3.99.
- Janina Phillips is a junior at the University of Montevallo majoring in nutrition and wellness. She took a 15-year break to raise her four children before returning to college. Her goal is to become a registered dietitian and work with the aging population in her area. She has volunteered in her community while maintaining a GPA of 3.86.
- Carla Mack is from Huntsville and a junior at Alabama A & M University majoring in dietetics. Her goal is to become a registered dietitian and continue on to graduate studies. She has a passion to be an active, influential dietitian in her community. She has maintained a GPA of 3.6.
- Harley Robertson is from Piedmont, AL, and a junior hospitality and culinary management major at Jacksonville State University. Her



High school students and teachers received scholarships and grants during the awards ceremony on April 25 at OvenBird.

- goal is to complete graduate studies and to secure a position leading to hotel management. She also would like to own her own bakery. She has maintained a GPA of 3.3.
- Courtney Hayhurst is from Pelham and a junior nutrition and dietetics major at Samford University. After she met Dame Pat Terry at a Samford preview day, she set her goal to become a registered dietitian. Her passion is to educate people about the importance of eating healthy and taking care of their body. She has a GPA of 3.7.
 - ShaRhonda Bandy is from Birmingham where she attended Wenonah High School. She currently attends Jacksonville State University and is majoring in hospitality and culinary management. She has a 3.23 GPA.
 - Julia Hamilton is from San Jose, CA, and a junior dietetics major at the University of Alabama. Her goal

- is to graduate from the hospitality program with Latin honors. She wants to find a mentor for support in her professional and personal development to help achieve her goal. Her GPA is 3.96.
- Alyssa Dominquez from Tampa, FL, is a hospitality management/hotel and restaurant major at Auburn University. Her goal is to open a small, luxury bed and breakfast while incorporating a bakery into the concept. Her GPA is 3.82.
 - Courtney Mitchell is from Huntsville and attends Auburn University where she is a dietetics major. Her goal is to help improve lives through nutrition education with emphasis on healthy food being fun and tasting great. Her GPA is 3.5.

Community College Award Winners

- Lynda Jorene Barfield is from Grand Bay, AL, now lives in Northport. She is enrolled in the culinary

- arts: pastry program at Shelton State Community College. She and her husband opened the very first food truck in Tuscaloosa “Jojo’s Food Trunk”. She lost her husband in 2016, sold the truck, and is now completing her goal of becoming a pastry chef. Her GPA is 4.0.
- Jessica Harris is from Hueytown and is a culinary arts major at Lawson State Community College. Her goal is to earn the manager certificate and work in the catering industry. She hopes to one day own her own catering business. Her GPA is 3.75.
 - Maya Hawkins is from Hoover and is enrolled in the hospitality management and baking and pastry program at Jefferson State Community College. She now works at The Club. Her goal is to own a hypo-allergenic bakery. She also wants to become proficient in the business component of owning a bakery. Her GPA is 4.0.

High School Award Winners

- Rebecca Mhagama is a senior at Moody High School and has been the captain of the state-winning ProStart management team from Moody High School for the past 2 years. She just returned from the national competition in Washington, DC. She has been accepted to the University of Alabama and plans to study political science and business. Her GPA is 3.77
- Shelby Clements is a senior at Fort Payne High School and a member of the ProStart management team that competed in Huntsville in March 2019. She plans to attend Jacksonville State University to major in elementary education. She describes herself as having patience, being

- responsible, and organized. Her GPA is 3.7.
- Tristan Dersham, a senior at Fort Payne High School, competed as a member of the ProStart management team in 2018 and in the ProStart culinary part of the competition in 2019. She will attend Western Kentucky University in the fall and plans to study psychology. Her GPA is 3.9.
 - Jessica Felix-Pascual is a senior at Fort Payne High School and was a member of the ProStart culinary team this year. She has been accepted to Northeast Alabama Community College and plans to major in culinary arts management. She will be eligible to apply for this scholarship again next year if successful in her studies at Northeast CC.

Teacher Grants

- Diann Pilgrim is a certified ProStart Teacher from Wenonah High School in Birmingham. Diann has competed in many culinary arts competitions over the years and is invested in her role as teacher and mentor to her students.
- Melissa Allphin from Moody High School has participated with her students in the National ProStart Competition for several years. As you can imagine this requires organization, dedication, and patience.

Entrepreneur Award

Tanesha Sims-Summers, owner of Naughty But Nice Kettle Corn Co. in Birmingham, specializes in crafting unique artisan sweet and salty kettle popped corn flavors. You can find them in local markets and service corporations, universities and sales events. Her mission is to offer a simple fresh product while using the best ingredients to craft each kernel into confectionary



Tanesha Sims-Summers, owner of Naughty But Nice Kettle Corn Co., received the Entrepreneur Award. Melissa Allphin, a ProStart teacher from Moody High School, received a teacher grant.

delight. Her plan is to use this monetary award to acquire additional equipment to allow the company to increase production quantity in a timely manner.

Non-Profit Organization Award

The Community Food Bank of Central Alabama was chosen by the LDEI Awards Committee to receive a monetary contribution in support of the “Kids Meal Campaign”. The goal of this program is to focus on the feeding and nourishment of children in our community. Dame Kathryn Strickland accepted this award on behalf of the CFB.

We already have an excellent place to focus this shared passion. Our organization is well established, and it is healthy. We have resources. We have audiences. People listen to us when we speak. How you contribute your voice to this chorus is up to you. But know this: We need every voice—every one of you—to make this chapter successful and to continue to make our outreach impactful.

We’ve made countless friends through our September Takeover of Pepper Place Market. We share our strengths each time we lend our expertise as cooking-contest judges and through our outreach with local culinary programs and non-profits. We grow stronger every time we proudly represent our organization when we’re out in the community.

We might focus a lot of our attention on our one big fundraiser, but we’re much more than just one event. The growing success of our Southern Soirée, allows us to impact lives and help women all over our state.

The reach of our Birmingham chapter goes far beyond our city. We really are helping change lives throughout Alabama.

I’m proud that we more than doubled the scholarship and grant money we awarded this year. That’s huge. That doesn’t happen without ongoing, organized passion for a shared cause.

This year’s Southern Soirée will be October 13, at The Barn at Shady Lane. Yes, I know that is Columbus Day weekend and some of you will be out of town. But that doesn’t mean you can’t be an important part of this group effort. You can secure a sponsor or two or three.

You can buy tickets and sell them to your friends and family. You can even make a dish before you leave town.

October 13, is not next month or even the next. You have lots of time to plan and figure out how you’re going to participate. Of course, if you’re here, you should be there. I promise you’ll be glad you came!

We all are busy. I’ve learned that there is never a perfect time to step up. I thought when my kids graduated high school and went to college that I would have lots of free time. I was mistaken. But what I have is enough.

Sometimes I have to work hard to make sure that’s the case, but, most days, what I have is enough.

What you have can be enough, too.

All the best!
Susan Swagler

Membership: Nomination forms due soon

By Leigh Sloss-Corra

It’s spring, meaning it’s the season to focus on growing our LDEI membership. In addition to working collaboratively to achieve the goals for our chapter, we all have busy professional lives. With the energy and skill diversity of new members joining every year, the Birmingham chapter of LDEI has the potential to significantly increase the impact we can make locally and nationally. New members make us stronger!

On April 8, Dames from the Birmingham chapter gathered for an

information meeting at the Emmet O’Neal Library to clarify the importance and process of nominating new members. Here are the highlights and dates to remember:

- The nomination season runs from April 1- June 1 of this year.
- Prospective members must have five consecutive years of experience in culinary/hospitality.
- A Dame may nominate any number of prospective members.
- Nomination forms and letters of recommendation must be received by the Membership Committee Chair, Leigh Sloss-Corra, no later than 5pm, June 1.

- Completed applications will be reviewed by the Membership Committee, and a slate of recommended nominees will be submitted to the Board for approval by July 10th.
- The Board-approved final slate will be voted on by the entire membership at the Annual Meeting on August 18.

For a recap of Membership Policies and Procedures reviewed at the April 8 meeting, including nomination letter and forms for nominees, Birmingham Dames should email leigh@pepperplacemarket.com.

Dames judge high school culinary competition

By Rosemary Dallam

The 2019 Alabama ProStart Student Invitational was held Monday, March 4, at The Westin Huntsville. The competition showcases the culinary, management, and academic talents of students from high schools across the state.

The student teams compete in both culinary and management events, which are judged by industry professionals and experts.

The winners of the 2019 Alabama ProStart Student Invitational are:

- Culinary Competition:
- 1st Place: Huntsville Center for Technology
 - 2nd Place: St. Clair County/Moody High School
 - 3rd Place: Career Academies of Decatur
- Management Competition:
- 1st Place: St. Clair County/Moody High School
 - 2nd Place: Calhoun County Career Academy
 - 3rd Place: South Baldwin Center for Technology

Dames Rebel Negley and Rosemary Dallam were among the 16 judges participating in this competition. There were a total of 14 schools that participated. The first-place winners will represent Alabama at the national competition this spring in Washington, DC. The Alabama Restaurant Association is the sponsor of this event.



Dames Rebel Negley and Rosemary Dallam judged the 2019 Alabama ProStart Student Invitational held in Huntsville on March 4. At right, Negley and Dallan shown with Chef Doug Allen of Pelham High School.



An Invititation to Nashville: A sneak peek at the 2019 LDEI International Conference

By Anne Byrn & Mindy Merrill

Dear Birmingham Dames, Your Nashville Dames to the north are busy planning the LDEI conference in Music City, Oct. 24-27. This is the perfect year for you to attend conference because it's so close!

Here are a few sneak peeks we have not shared with anyone else: On Thursday, Oct. 24, we will stage a half dozen pre-conference tours, ranging from an all-day excursion to Jack Daniel's to shorter in-town tours focusing on immigration, farming, civil rights, music, and our neighborhoods. That night, we'll host a barbecue supper and songwriters night at Sylvia Ganier's



Anne Bryn, left, and Mindy Merrill

Green Door Gourmet farm with a big dose of country music.

That next morning, Dame Maneet Chauhan, celeb entrepreneur/ restaurateur, will be our keynote speaker, talking about her own rhythm and roots. Breakout sessions on Friday and Saturday will speak to global issues in local ways. We will explore fermentation, hunger, the future of sweet, suffrage

and the Nashville connection to it, as well as writing and craft whiskey and moonshine. On Friday evening, we head to the new Tennessee State Museum for a Taste of Nashville presented by our Dame chefs and saluting Tennessee women in music. There will be plenty of live music, libations, good food, and we have the run of the museum.

The last full day of conference will be kicked off by Green Tables breakfast speaker Becca Stevens of Thistle Farms, followed by more panels, a local marketplace, and plenty of hospitality. The Grand Dame banquet will be at the host hotel, the Loews Vanderbilt, which is a beautiful property, located right across the street from Vanderbilt University and in walking distance of the Parthenon and Centennial Park. And for those needing some night life, we are planning a honky tonk after-dinner surprise.

You can brunch on Sunday—we will arrange special menus at our Dame restaurants—and you can board the bus to Kentucky where those Dames are organizing a tour of the Bourbon country. As you can see, we have a lot going on, and we expect attendance to be strong. So register when that opens up, book your room at the Loews, and know that the Nashville Dames really look forward to seeing you!

Rest up!
Anne Byrn & Mindy Merrell,
Co-Chairs
LDEI Conference 2019 in Nashville



El ZunZún happy hour party pics!



On April 24, Becky Satterfield hosted a Birmingham Dames happy hour celebration at El ZunZún. Attendees not only enjoyed the social aspects of the day, but also were impressed with a variety of appetizers and beverages. Thank you, Becky, for a lovely event!



Outreach update: LDEI Birmingham mentoring program launched

By Cheryl Slocum

The Outreach Committee launched the Emerging Women Entrepreneurs Mentoring Program in February to assist female food entrepreneurs in the Birmingham

area in moving their new businesses forward. In March, seven women entrepreneurs expressed interest in working with a LDEI mentor and completed questionnaires to help identify the best matches. We are currently in the process of identifying Birmingham Dames interested in becoming mentors and will determine the best matches based on the candidates' profiles and needs. Mentor matches should be ready for announcement by the end of May.

Silent auction experience: Dames teach a heart-healthy cooking class

By Pat Terry

Dames Rosemary Dallam and Pat Terry, both registered dietitians, auctioned a heart-healthy cooking class at last year's Southern Soirée. The couple who claimed the class, shared their thoughts about what kind of recipes they wanted to prepare and brought friends to the April 2019 event.

The class was held in the former *Southern Living* Test Kitchen that is now a Samford Food Production Lab and part of The Samford Wellness Kitchen initiative. We dubbed it the "Dames Lean Paula Deen Experience" after lightening two Paula Deen recipes—cutting the calories in half—and included a heart-healthy kimchi hummus to prepare and eat while cooking the other two recipes.

The happy cooks went home with a delicious heart-healthy chicken pie in a beautiful stoneware dish as well as a banana-peanut butter pie and the remaining hummus. The participants were given a notebook with the recipes, health benefits of ingredients, and resources for their use. It was great "experience" for all!



One of the Dame-led experiences auctioned at last year's Southern Soirée was a heart-healthy cooking class taught by Dames Pat Terry and Rosemary Dallam, both registered dietitians. The winners recently redeemed their experience, titled "Dames Lean Paula Deen Experience."

Plans for Southern Soirée 2019 underway

By Susan Swagler

Kathy G. Mezrano (Kathy G. & Company) and Kay Bruno Reed (Iz Weddings & Events) will be joined by Barbara Gaines Kenyon (Happy Event Co.) this year to chair our Southern Soirée fundraiser set for Sunday, October 13, 2019.

The event-planning expertise these accomplished women all bring to this event is incredible! And their camaraderie—this coming together for the greater good—is one of our greatest strengths. It's what makes our organization so special.

Additionally, most of the fundraiser committee members have agreed to return to handle media, ticketing, volunteers, and more—all the many moving parts that go into making this event fun and successful.

As you probably know, we had to find a different venue this year because Jones Valley Teaching Farm will be in the middle of renovations in October. Kathy G. secured a partnership, early on, with The Barn at Shady Lane, saving us thousands in rental fees. This venue already is well equipped with restrooms and lighting and tables and chairs and even a small kitchen, so we will save additionally on other rental costs.

What looked to be a problem initially, Kathy G. says, turned out to be our good fortune. "Since we

Ways to Get Involved

- Help secure sponsorships, either using your personal connections or providing contact information to the sponsorship committee
- Donate your time and expertise for a Dame-led experience for the silent auction
- Work at the silent auction the day of the fundraiser
- Sell tickets
- Promote the event on your social media
- Volunteer the day of the event for set up or take down, or as a greeter collecting tickets

are moving to a much larger venue," Kay adds, "hopefully our attendance will increase."

They are thinking again about a French-Southern menu that takes Escoffier dishes and gives them a Southern twist. (Take a look at Escoffier's recipes, and see how similar many of them are to our own Southern favorites. It's really interesting.)

We will, of course, begin again with a cocktail hour. Kay says, "I would like to have more time for hors d'oeuvres with cocktails before dinner is served." I don't think anyone will argue with that.

The ticketing site is already up. Feel free to begin sharing the link with your family and friends. Go to: <https://www.accelevents.com/e/southernsoiree2019>

It's not too early to start selling those tickets! And begin considering whom you might ask for spon-

sorships. We'll share that info about sponsor levels soon.

Finally, we'll do our Dame Experiences silent auction again this year. If you'd like to donate your time and unique talents to this effort (like the one on page 8), email me at susan@swagler.net.

We had an incredibly successful Southern Soirée last year, and we made a lot of friends in the process. We more than doubled the amount of scholarship and grant money we are able to award (see the story on page 2).

This is an important and impactful thing that we do. Figure out where you fit in. Help us get people there. Then plan to be there, too.

Our 2019 fundraiser hashtags

#LDEIBHMSoiree2019
#howwefundthefuture

Behind the Scenes: Q&A with Dame Brooke Bell

By Christiana Roussel

As the Vice President of Culinary & Custom Content at Hoffman Media, Brooke Bell has her hands in a lot of pies—literally and figuratively. Overseeing the production of more than 150 magazines a year, including the titles *Bake from Scratch*, *Southern Cast Iron*, *Taste of the South*, *Cooking with Paula Deen*, *Louisiana Cooking*, and *Cook Real Food Every Day*, it is safe to say Brooke loves what she does, and she does it so well.

With a title like yours, it sounds like you are constantly on the go. What fills your days?

No day is the same! Every day is different and I love that. I am always bouncing from one project to the next and working with different editorial and creative teams. That is exciting.

I work with a lot of our partners on custom content. So, we have a ton of companies coming to us requesting recipes or videos and we create content for them. It might be a cookbook for a partner or a client of ours. Basically, anything that falls under food or custom content falls under me.

Are the publication dates staggered so you are not slammed all at once, every month?

We will publish around 170 magazines this year as a company. That does not include cookbooks and other projects. Most weeks, we have something going to press. We do have staggered schedules but most

Brooke Bell, who previously served as secretary of our chapter, enjoys dreaming up new culinary delights both at work and at home. Here she is with her Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, Harry.



of our on-sale dates are similar with our bi-monthly titles. Truly, there is never a dull moment.

How much travel do you have to do? I travel a decent amount. I feel like it kind of goes in waves. There are a lot of events we're a part of in the fall and spring so those times tend to be busier.

So, Monday rolls around—how do you start your week?

I try to start every day with exercise, a little bit of that life-work balance, but I admit to not being very good at. I'll go to the gym or play tennis, which gives me time to think about my day and brainstorm. It is amazing what ideas you

can come up with when you are listening to good music and on a treadmill.

We have some team meetings on Monday mornings but it might be a day filled with photo shoot meetings, tastings in the test kitchen for different projects, editorial line-up meetings with our different teams, calls with clients, checking in on the status of different projects. It might be coming around the table with new partners and strategically deciding on projects we want to do together that will meet their initiatives. Cover shoots, layout review, looking at every page before it goes to press, reviewing color before uploading images. No day is ever the same.

Do you have a time management program or software you use to stay on top of so many things? I don't. That is something that is challenging for everybody—when do you have time to sit down and do email, or handle correspondence and those things? I do like to, first thing in the morning, hit email and then, at the very end of the day when it is finally getting quiet again, is another good time. I might leave the office, be cooking dinner, and still getting emails done and ideas out of my head to a team. I love what I do. It is hard to NOT work because it does not feel like work. It is always on my mind, in a great way.

Talk to us about social media. You know it is a great way to communicate with people—someone you may have collaborated with in the past or you might want to in the future. It is a great way to get ideas for future stories. I think a lot of editors find so many great leads on social media. I check it in the morning and at night. For the most part, I stay off it during the day unless we're looking for something specific. We have twelve different social media brands that we are actively monitoring throughout the day and we might be looking at analytics. But, it can be a time suck.

What is the number one app you use on your phone? That would have to be my Entourage app that grants access to my work email. That is where I have my calendar. One challenge I hear a lot of people facing these days is managing the different forms of communication—did I get that information via email or text or through social media? I try to funnel everything back to email when I can.

What is one of the highlights of your job—like you pinch yourself, you cannot believe you get paid to do this. I would have to say that anytime an issue comes back from the press. You put so much love and energy into a magazine or a cookbook and when you actually hold it and see it for the first time...that really never gets old! Fortunately, it happens often for me because it seems like there is always something coming back from press! And I would just say another highlight has been the opportunity to meet some of the amazing food influencers in our generation. You know, I sent an email to Dorie Greenspan right before you walked in the door this afternoon. Having that chance to make those connections is something I always appreciate.

The #1 drudgery task of your job? Trying to keep up with email – they never stop coming! It can be overwhelming. I love the creative side but there is a business side of publishing and what we do. I really like both sides. I can shift from giving creative direction to analyzing a spreadsheet. That is not something I started out doing in journalism, but it is obviously a very important side of the business. I am a huge proponent of taking real vacations too. But, I will still spend a little bit of time in the morning or the evening, checking emails. I might not respond but just read through things. I am invested and I don't like NOT knowing what's going on.

Any advice you'd give someone coming up these days? You need those business classes! Even if you are a journalism major, take those and take graphic design

classes, take photography classes. Take all of those things that create that visual package.

What did you major in? I went to Birmingham-Southern and there was not a journalism degree then so I majored in English and creative writing.

Have you gone back to school to tackle any advanced degrees? I went to culinary school at Cullinard after I graduated from college. I took a couple of years off in between. I wanted to go to culinary school right away but my mom suggested I think about it for a while before making that investment.

What are some extracurricular activities you do that you feel like add real value to what you do? The Southern Coterie is such a unique group with a unique mission. That is what is so incredible about the community they've built. It might have started out as just business-related, I have so many amazing friends from this group. I talk to them on a daily basis. There are so many cheerleaders. Cherie and Whitney, the founders, are the biggest cheerleaders I know—of entrepreneurs, of women.

I love nothing more than just cooking and baking on the weekends. I am always going to have some project going on, each weekend. It is therapy to me, to spend time in the kitchen. I might spend all week looking at content but I am not hands-on so I love to be able to do that in my free time.

Do you answer emails on the weekends? Absolutely.

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Do you have a mentor?
No, I do not.

Do you have mentees?
No, I do not. But, I am always happy to meet with someone for coffee or a chat to offer advice or discuss ideas.

What are some professional organizations you belong to that add meaning to your life?
Well, of course, Les Dames d’Es-coffier and then after that, I would have to say The Southern Coterie. You know, wherever you go, there

are Dames. One of the things I love about being a Dame is that you have this instant network of women, wherever you might be. I was the Charleston Food & Wine Festival recently and there was a group of Dames there from all over the country.

If your house was burning down and you could grab one thing from the kitchen, what would it be?
I have a box of menus I’ve collected for years and years and years. I

always write the date and who I shared the meal with and what I ate. I would have to grab that box.

Three ingredients you always have in the kitchen, besides your basic salt, pepper, olive oil, etc.
Good butter—President brand. I always have toasted almonds on hand because I literally put them on top of everything and anything. I toast a big batch each week. The last item would have to be eggs because if you have eggs, you always have breakfast, lunch, or dinner!

Favorite Things Party is a hit—again

By Ashley Tarver

February 25, found Birmingham Dames gathered at the John Hand Club for our 2nd Annual Favorite Things Party. Every one of the three items that each brought had a story, and it was great fun to see things that bring delight to others. Christiana Roussel started the exchange with two plants potted in reusable paper planters. She followed with a Birch box filled with beauty products. New Mexico is dear to Martha Johnston’s heart, and I was lucky enough to score a dried chili mix to make salsa. Idie Hastings shared her recent practice of only using natural skin and cleaning projects plus her absolute favorite vegetable peeler which is gentle enough to peel soft fruits and veggies.

Kate Nicholson wowed the crowd with an Edna Lewis cookbook and a weighted, waterproof page holder. Much to our chagrin, the cookbook was Kate’s mother’s and not up for grabs. Cheryl Slocum brought lovely handmade dish towels and a carton of cream soda that represented

her hometown, New York City. Martha also brought a garden trowel which she uses as a serving tool in the kitchen prior to gardening season. She accidentally caught the wrapping paper on fire but the trowel was safe. Our President, Susan Swagler, brought “Better than Sex Mascara” and Penzy’s Spicy Chili 9000 blend. Some mused that soft-spoken Susan might have a bit of a wild side. Jan Gautro brought a reusable bag perfect for traveling or groceries and the hand cream she never leaves the house without. Sherron Goldstein brought a kitchen sink stopper with a chef hat as the pull that she described as indestructible and silver dragonfly cheese knife which Andrea Griffith excitedly pocketed. Susan Nash Gilpin appeared with the coolest charcoal closet odor eaters. She also shared her love of Yorkshire Gold Tea which immediately bonded her with fellow anglophile, Rebecca Williamson. Telia Johson warmed our hearts when she brought old-fashioned playing cards that so many of us

remember from our mothers and grandmothers. Her modern twist was a gift certificate to the movies. Mary Esther Carpenter Brocato shared a set of three liquid hand soaps scented with herbal flavors and gorgeously packaged.

We learned Brittany Garrigus loves any and all beauty products, especially face masks. She said, “even my country boy husband says my skin glows after I use this face mask.” Rebecca scored Ashley’s homemade rosewater bath salts and rose water misting spray. Idie Hasting didn’t hesitate to choose a tin of Iranian saffron from Ashley Tarver. Leigh Sloss-Corra brought a small piece of pottery she claimed was salt cellar but some thought it leaned more toward a sake glass. This event is most special because it gives Dames the opportunity to cross from professionalism to getting to know each other personally. This ultimately makes our bond stronger as we work together to make help more women reach their goals.

Warmer weather wines: A few to seek out and try

By Alexis Douglas,
certified sommelier

Warmer weather brings fresh, lighter, vibrant flavors to our table. Naturally, we want to match these characteristics to our wine selections. Refreshing acidity, lighter body, and interesting flavors are the elements I seek out for my perfect spring and summer wines. Here’s a few of my current favorites:



^ Ameztoi Getariako Txakolina, Spain (cha-coh-LEEN-uh). I’ve loved “Txakoli” since I discovered them early in my wine career... now they’re having a moment here in Birmingham! Due to a few key placements at Bottega and Automatic Seafood, and a recent wine dinner at OvenBird, they’re gaining popularity locally. For good reason: they’re almost TOO easy to drink. Light in body, the white is spritzy, a little peachy, and ridiculously delicious; the rosé is balanced and pretty; and the red is light, fruity, and best served chilled. With San Sebastian visible from the vineyards, you can imagine the wines pair perfectly with seafood, and of course, paella. Available for retail purchase

at Hop City or Classic Wine Co. Note the rosé can be harder to find due to recent popularity.



^ Domaine Lupin “Roussette de Savoie” Frangy, Savoie, France—Made from the Altesse grape from the alpine area of Eastern France, this dry white offers seamless balance with the body of Chardonnay and pear and honey notes. Perfect with seared scallops, but super versatile as an aperitif with a grazing board or heavier seafood or poultry. Available at Chez Fon Fon and Crestline Pig.

ROSÉ SEASON IS HERE! Spring is king when it comes to rosés since the new vintages are released and the wines are essentially light reds that you serve chilled: versatile and crowd-pleasing, and perfect with lighter fare. Try Fairris Girardin Macon Rosé (shown top right) from Burgundy, France made from Pinot Noir’s fun cousin, Gamay (the grape of Beaujolais)... this new dry Rosé has fresh red fruit notes and a hint of spice...perfect for grilled meats and mild cheeses. I found this hard-to-find gem at Hop City.



^ Robert Biale “Party Line” Zinfandel, North Coast, CA. From one of the most classic and excellent Zinfandel producers, this is an easy-drinking version. This resembles a Pinot Noir in body, with more berry fruit and a kick of black pepper spice. Amazing with cured or grilled meats! Available at Crestline Pig.

The newsletter committee is thrilled Alexis has agreed to contribute wine recommendations for each issue—this is her inaugural column.

2019 Flavors of Mexico in Oaxaca

By Gia McCollister

Oaxaca is one of Mexico’s foremost food destinations, and I was lucky to be part of the March 6-9 LDEI experience organized by the Mexico chapter with the sponsorship of “Jose Cuervo”. The Dames of this chapter really know how to show the best that Mexico offers.

Oaxaca is situated in a valley perfect for many types of agriculture including corn, cacao, and chili peppers. The region is known as “land of seven moles,” because it has seven different regions. Oaxaca is also the birthplace of the crop most important to Mexican cuisine, corn. They cultivate around 200 varieties of heirloom corn. Oaxacan cheese, mezcal, and grasshopper also are present in many of the local dishes.

We had a full agenda during the four days of the trip including an art exhibition with local artist Alejandra Villegas and a wonderful display of local artisanal vendors. We enjoyed an incredible Guelaguetza Festival Show presentation with different Oaxaca communities wearing their traditional clothing and performing folk dances that are particular to their region. We enjoyed cooking classes with Carina Santiago, a famous and renowned traditional Oaxaca cook. We also cooked with four generations of the women in her family. It was a blessed experience!

Chef Olga Cabrera and Chef Luis Gonzalez presented a demonstration of Mixteca cuisine. And then they guided us on a visit to the market to get ingredients for our chocolate class.

Angelica Vasquez demonstrated the ancient art of making clay dish-



Above: Gia joined the women from San March Tlapazola for a pottery making demonstration. At right: For the final dinner in Mexico, makeup artists transformed the Dames, including Gia and Betsy, into Catrinas. La Catrina is the symbol of Dia de los Muertos. Today La Catrina symbolizes the relationship Mexicans have with death.



es and pottery with a cooperative of women from San Marcos Tlapazola. We drove into the mountains for an archaeological visit to Monte Alban, the capital of the Zapotec civilization from 500 BC to 800 AD. We visited the world-famous Tule Tree also called Montezuma Cypress Tree which is the widest tree in the world. We visited a cooperative of women that weave

pre-Hispanic textile traditions of their Zapotec culture. Finally, we took part in a ritual called “Limpia”, which is a ceremony of ancient indigenous medicine practiced to cleanse the body, mind, and soul by alleviating spiritual problems.

The culinary experience we enjoyed each day of our journey was a truly unique and unforgettable. The main ingredient present in all our

meals was “mole” in all different kinds, red, green, black and white.. Our first dinner was created by Chef Daniel Magro from our host Hotel Quinta Real , a former convent built in 1576. After a cooking class we enjoyed a Oaxaca lunch at Carina Santiago’s home in Teotitlan Del Valle. We dined in one of Latin America’s Best 50 restaurants by Chef Alejandro Ruiz, at his iconic Casa Oaxaca Restaurant. The dinner was traditional with a modern twist and focus on local and sustainable options from the local market. Another of our lunches was at Tierra del Sol – Casa Restaurant, owned by chef Olga Cabrera Her food is in the Oaxacan tradition with emphasis on Mixteca region. She hosted us also for dinner and served her family favorites.

After the archeological tour we were delighted with a fantastic lunch prepared on La Catedral Restaurant which has been in operation since 1976. Our last dinner was cooked by legendary Deyanira Aquino “La Teca” who in recent years cooked for Pope Benedict XVI. She was joined by Chef Luis Gonzalez, Katy Smith, and Erik Aronow. The highlight of the night was the music and traditional dance performed by 30 children followed by fireworks and all Dames dressed as “Catrina”. Viva Mexico!

I so appreciate this unique experience that will be with us forever!

Dames attend SFA Symposium



Above (left to right): Leigh Sloss-Corra, Susan Swagler, Angela Schmidt, Melany Robinson, Rebecca Williamson, Pardis Stitt, and Martha Johnston gather to congratulate Robinson on her presentation. Right: Raleigh Chef Ashley Christenson, recently named James Beard Foundation Outstanding Chef 2019, visits with Andrea Griffith following her presentation at SFA.



By Martha Johnston

Southern Foodways Alliance Winter Symposium was held in Birmingham on February 9. Eight Birmingham Dames participated in the Food is Work program focused on labor challenges and possibilities in Birmingham and across the South.

Melany Robinson, Polished Pig Media, and her mother Patricia Bundy, psychologist, discussed restaurant crises and responses. In addition, Birmingham Portraits of People at Work by Celestia

Morgan was commissioned to hang during the symposium and then moved temporarily to the Birmingham Library. ASFA’s Ashley M. Jones presented her suite of poems on food culture and food work. Other program speakers included Chef John Hall of Post Office Pies and Chef Ashley Christenson of Poole’s in Raleigh.

Southern Foodways Alliance was founded at a meeting in Birmingham just over 20 years ago. Dames Martha Johnston and Pardis Stitt are among the 50 founding members of this organization.

..... Dames Recommend

Havana, Cuba

Rachel West

Despite the on-going changes affecting travel to Cuba, the process was fairly easy overall to navigate and is certainly a trip that anyone can plan themselves without having to go through a travel agent, group tour, or cruise line. We flew to Havana for a long weekend and booked everything ourselves, staying in an Airbnb in Old Havana. (Let me know if you want the link—we'd definitely recommend it!)

Some highlights:

- The Revolution Museum: This museum is in the former Presidential Palace and still has the bullet holes that mark a failed attempted coup. It shares the history of the revolution that brought Fidel Castro to power and some of the initiatives that were enacted afterwards, including eradicating illiteracy on the island and improving health care. The signs in the museum are in both Spanish and English.
- Ernest Hemingway's House, Finca Viglia: It's pretty easy to find a cab to take you to Finca Viglia (about 30-minute ride from Old Havana) to explore Hemingway's home on your own. You can hire a guide to show you around, too. The house is preserved as Hemingway left it—in his signature taxidermy- and book-heavy style. You don't walk into the house, but rather look through windows and doors, which actually allows you to see everything quite easily.
- The arts thrive in Cuba, and we got to see the talents of musicians daily in restaurants and public squares and the work of artists in the graffiti and murals around the city.



Left: Classic cars line the street beside Parque Central in Havana. Below: La Bodeguita del Medio is the birthplace of mojitos. It was also supposedly a frequent and favorite stop for Ernest Hemingway when he was in the city.

- Beautifully maintained classic cars are everywhere in Havana, and the Cuban mechanics who maintain them are their own type of artists, keeping them running by creating their own parts since age-appropriate replacement parts aren't available.
- All the mojitos. Cuba is the birthplace of both mojitos and daquiris. There are plenty of opportunities to drink them.
- Habana 61: This restaurant was excellent, with a curated menu that offered high-end flavors as well as traditional Cuban dishes. You'll need to make reservations. We just stopped by one day and reserved a table for the next night.

A few notes:

- Debit and credit cards are not accepted in Cuba. You must take cash, and exchange it for the local currency for tourists, CUCs—Cuban Convertible Peso.
- There are restrictions on where Americans can spend money (the U.S. Department of State provides a list, which includes hotels, some stores in Old Havana, and casinos), but those are easy to avoid, and didn't negatively impact our trip.



- For visas to Cuba, there are many categories that you can apply under, but the most common one for American tourists seems to be Support for the Cuban People. Once your airline ticket is booked, you can apply for your visa through the airline and they'll mail it to you before your trip.
- Download an offline map app of Cuba before you go. This was invaluable in helping us find our way since wifi in the country is limited.

Perth & Melbourne, Australia

Leigh Sloss-Corra

As we move into summer and brighten our cooking with the

season's super-abundance of farm-fresh fruits and vegetables, Australia's remarkable thriving food culture offers a few suggestions, as I saw on a recent trip to Perth and Melbourne.

Breakfast is Australia's favorite meal, and it almost always includes smashed or sliced avocado and a poached egg. You'll find the option to add a poached egg to dishes beyond breakfast, too. According to a study by phys.org, "Each Australian is eating an average of 4.7 eggs per week and they are now more likely to be eaten at lunch, dinner, or as snacks." Breakfast eateries are packed seven days a week, with multiple options on any given city block or suburban village street. Coffee consumption is keeping pace, with Australians spending \$8 billion on coffee in 2018. The favorite coffee order nationwide is a latte, with a flat white in second place. Cow's milk is still the preferred "dairy" addition, but soy, almond, and coconut milk are everywhere and almost as popular.

"Salad" describes a much wider variety of dishes than we expect in the U.S., with standard ingredients featured like caramelized mushrooms, shredded beets, sliced oranges, grilled seasonal fruits like peaches and figs, toasted macadamia nuts and pepitas, crumbled feta or goat cheese, and a variety of fresh herbs.

Speaking of beets, boiled, roasted or grilled, sliced, shredded, or smashed, chefs add them to just about any dish that comes out of the kitchen, from burgers to roast duck. Australians love their beets and are eating them now more than ever. The other surprise ingredient we saw popping up everywhere, and often alongside beets, was pumpkin. Roasted or



Above: Eggs are popular among Australians and are found on menus beyond breakfast. Right: Al fresco dining is popular in Australia, too. They've figured out that eating outside makes everything taste better.



grilled, pumpkin is so common, you can pick it up in stores as pre-cooked "fries" to add to lunchboxes or serve to the kids after school. One of the best pizzas we had on Rottnest Island came with sliced pumpkin, beets, and feta. So good! While people clearly eat out a lot—restaurants are always full!—locals also seem to still enjoy cooking at home, with both men and women contributing to the shopping and cooking. Grocery stores seems to be always busy, and farmers' markets and specialty

shops do a bustling business, offering impressive selections of organic, "locally grown" and artisan-made items.

The selection of Australian wines seems endless, and all of them are tasty. With the current exchange rate, great wines are a real bargain compared to comparables bottles in the U.S. People drink wine at lunch, dinner, and in between. With excellent public transportation in most cities and suburbs, enjoying a

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second or third glass is less of a problem.

Eating outside makes everything taste better. Australians have figured this out and eat al fresco whenever they can. Restaurants and bars with garage doors or window walls keep them open all the time to let the outside in. They know that fresh air and connection to the vibrancy just outside enhances the look and taste of every dish.

Italy

Kathy G. Mezrano

From March 25 to April 5, Dame Kathy G. Mezrano led a food and wine tour through four regions of Italy that included cooking classes, walking tours, wine tours, and guided tours of a Parmigiano cheese farm (shown at right), prosciutto di Parma, and a balsamic vinegar producer. Dame Rosalyn Bloomston joined in on the fun, too.



.....Let's Toast.....

Rebecca Williamson, owner and creator of Holmsted Fines Chutney, ran in the Maebashii Japan Marathon on April 21. She represented the City of Birmingham through the Birmingham Track Club in our Sister City's Marathon. >>



Idie Hastings has announced that Hot and Hot Fish Club will relocate to the Pepper Place development in October

2019. On September 30, the Hastings will close the current location to prepare for the move.

Patricia H. Terry, PhD, RD, LD, FAND, Professor at Samford University, is one of 13 U.S.

dietitians selected to receive the Cabot Creamery Community Award that recognizes



dietitians with a commitment to the profession, who give selflessly of their time to volunteer within their communities, and encourage eating local food.

Deborah Stone, Stone Hollow Farmstead, has opened a new, permanent boutique at Pepper Place called FarmStand. She invites Birmingham Dames to come by during the week and bring your friends.

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Birmingham chapter
P.O. Box 43542
Birmingham, Alabama 35243

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*Newsletter committee members:
Martha Johnston (co-chair),
Rachel West (co-chair), Brooke Bell,
Leigh Sloss-Corra, Susan Swagler,
Ashley Tarver, and Jan Walsh*