



Les Dames d'Escoffier
INTERNATIONAL



Founded in 2013

Ideibirmingham.org

Spring 2023

President's Note

Dear Dames,
2023 has been amazing so far, and I can't believe how much we've done in such a short time. Our chapter has been busy—celebrating, planning, and breaking records. We wrapped up 2022 with a holiday celebration at Avine, now officially the “best party ever.” Being together in that beautiful space with wonderful people, great food, and delicious drinks was a joy. The programs committee, which organized it, knocked it out of the park that night and all year long.

After a holiday break, we jumped back in with more programs for Dames, including the record-breaking Sweet Treats fundraiser, which sold twice as many boxes as last year and generated triple the revenue—\$7,500! More than half our members donated, worked, and helped sell boxes. We have started a new tradition, an effective and fun fundraiser, that spreads goodwill and promotes our members' businesses throughout the community. Win-win!

We continue to volunteer monthly at the Community Food Bank, and by the time you read this, will have wrapped another year of co-hosting the Food Bank's Gala, Feast of Hope. Besides helping an organiza-

continued on page 10, see Letter

Sweet Treats 2023 Sweetens the Deal



by Jessica Bennett

Birmingham Dames brightened a dreary February 11th in the sweetest way with the return of the Sweet Treats program.

Led by Gia McCollister, Rebel Negley, and Sherron Goldstein, Birmingham Dames baked, packed, and sold boxes of sweet confections such as cookies,

chocolates, cakes, and bars—all for a donation of \$50.

The pickup was held at Pepper Place, staffed by Dames Pam Lolley, Stacey Craig, Kathy G. Mezrano, Martha Johnston, Fanoula Gulas, Susan Swagler, Roz Bloomston, and President Leigh Sloss-Corra. Dames Becky Satterfield, Jasmine Smith,

continued on page 2, see Sweets

Kristen Hall, and Rosemary Dallam stopped by to lend a hand as well. Twenty-one Dames helped pack deluxe boxes on the previous day.

Christiana Roussel spearheaded a social media campaign, and Donna Cornelius helped market boxes with an article in *Over the Mountain Journal*.

Sweet Treats 2023 surpassed expectations in what is becoming a sought-after annual event, with deluxe boxes selling out at 120 units. Thanks to the incredible outpouring of donated baked goods from baker-Dames, additional treats were offered on site in smaller boxes for \$15 or \$35.

Dames raised over \$7,500 in total, representing an increase in sales and proceeds greater than all previous years put together.

The event's success will allow for the creation of a "Cookie Grant," an additional entrepreneurial grant of \$5,000, with the remaining proceeds going toward scholarships. Space for assembling boxes was provided by Rylie Hightower, owner of The Lumbar, who received an entrepreneurial grant from the organization—an excellent example of the efficacy of the grants program coming full circle.

Treats were donated by the following Dames:

- Roz Bloomston, retired caterer
- Sonthe Burge, an instructor in Samford University's Wellness Kitchen
- Bronnie Cox, Bronnie's Brittle
- Clara Darling, Samford's Wellness Kitchen
- Sidney Fry, a James Beard Award-winning food and nutrition writer and editor
- Fanoula Gulas, The Greek Kouzina



A variety of treats from baker-Dames were offered in this year's Sweet Treats boxes. This year's event exceeded expectations, raising over \$7,500 and surpassing all previous years.

- Kristen Farmer Hall, The Essential, Bandit Pâtisserie, and Bar La Fête
- Emily Nabors Hall, The Breakup Cookie
- Amy Jason, Cookie Fix
- Telia Johnson, Telia Johnson Cakes
- Pam Lolley, a longtime recipe tester and developer in *Southern Living's* test kitchen
- Kathy G. Mezrano, Kathy G. & Co. Catering
- Gia McCollister, Gia's Cakes.
- April McClung, Emily's Heirloom Pound Cakes
- Erin Mooney and Sara Walker, Tre Luna
- Kate Nicholson, a food, cookbook, and recipe editor
- Susan Notter, Elizabeth Moore Chocolates
- Crystal Peterson, Yo' Mama's
- Becky Satterfield, Satterfield's restaurant
- Cheryl Slocum, senior food editor at *Food & Wine* magazine
- Leigh Sloss-Corra, executive director of the Market at Pepper Place
- Jasmine Smith, recipe developer and tester at Dotdash Meredith
- Joy Smith, Sorelle Café
- Susan Swagler, Savor blog
- Pat Terry, creator of Samford University's Wellness Kitchen
- Carey Thomasson, former private chef and restaurant owner
- Emily Tuttle-Shell, Bistro V
- Rebecca Williamson, creator of Holmsted Fines
- Jennifer Yarbrough, Crestline Bagel

Additionally, Glenn Rinsky, a chef and culinary instructor at Jefferson State Community College, donated sweets for the fundraiser.



Above: Dames Wesley Lassen, Pat Terry, and Gia McCollister were part of a group of 21 Dames (top right) who packed boxes on Friday, February 10, at The Lumbar in preparation for Saturday's Sweet Treats pickup at Pepper Place.

At right: Dames Becky Satterfield, Roz Bloomston, Idie Hastings, and Dulce Rivera were part of the packing team.

Below: The cookies, chocolates, cakes, and bars that filled the Sweet Treats boxes were baked by dozens of Dames.



Feast of Hope 2023: Sharing a Feast and Serving Those in Need

by Susan Swagler

The Community Food Bank of Central Alabama held its second annual Feast for Hope Gala on Saturday, March 4 in the Food Bank warehouse, and the Birmingham Dames helped, again, to make it happen. Several members who own catering companies produced the food and dozens of Dames were on hand that night to pour wine, serve as hostesses, and talk about the Food Bank and our own organization.

It's always a fun, beautiful celebration of community spirit and giving. And in honor of our partnership, the Food Bank gives our organization a check for \$2,500 that we distribute as a scholarship to a young woman who is focusing a part of her studies on community outreach through food.

As with last year, the setting was a chandelier-lit section of the sprawling warehouse with tables set with flowers and sparkling china and crystal. Dames and Food Bank staff greeted guests at the festive champagne wall featuring Paula Kornell Brut from California, donated by Vintage Wine Estates and AL Crown. Then those guests were escorted on a short tour of the Food Bank so they could see how the organization works to feed needy families in our area.

This past January alone, the Food Bank distributed 1,562,847 pounds of food to those in need, providing over 1,302,373 meals to families facing hunger. Our organization joined 1,385 other volunteers who gave 4,021 hours of service to help make this happen.



The Food Bank's warehouse was transformed into a chandelier-lit event with sparkling china and crystal.

Kathy G. Mezrano, who has spearheaded our involvement with the Feast for Hope Gala this year and last, says: "This year's menu was just as exciting as last year's. Our Dame-owned catering companies produced a five-course dinner starting again with the first course—smoked salmon with a quail egg—in a 'tuna can' by Dame Kay Reed. The salad course featuring Snow's Bend Farms vegetables from Dame Margaret Ann Snow was produced by Dame Idie Hastings. Dames Erin Mooney, Sara Walker and I teamed up and produced the entrée—braised beef short ribs and spring risotto with early peas and asparagus tips." (This dish was such a hit last year, that gala-goers requested it again this year.)

"As in the French tradition," Kathy G continues, "we also had a cheese course. It was designed by Dame Lindsey Noto. The 'pièce de resis-

tance' this year was an array of desserts from eight of our pastry Dames: Fanoula Gulas (who headed up this all-star team), Joy Smith, Kristal Bryant, Amy Jason, April McClung, Emily Nabors Hall, Geri Martha O'Hara and Telia Johnson."

Each course was expertly paired with delicious wines sourced by certified sommelier Dame Alexis Douglas. She worked with Vintage Wine Estates and AL Crown, Martine's Wines, and Vineyard Brands and International Wines and Beer who have been generous with their donations to the Food Bank for this event.

Behind the scenes, Dame Ashley McMakin headed up the hospitality room where working Dames could grab a bite to eat and a sip of something bubbly.

continued on page 6, see Gala



Above: Dozens of Dames were on hand for the Feast for Hope Gala. Members poured wine, served as hostesses, and talked about the work of the Food Bank and our organization. At right: Dames Pat Terry, Gia McCollister, Martha Johnston, and Leigh Sloss-Corra were some of those members.



This gala event is just one of the ways we partner with the Food Bank.

Every month, members of our chapter volunteer at the Food Bank, says Dame Susan Swagler, who heads this volunteer outreach committee that is there on the third Wednesday of each month from 1 to 3 p.m.

“We are just a few of the thousands of volunteers each month who work to sort foods that are then supplied to over 230 food pantries, shelters, and children’s programs in central Alabama. The food is distributed to those in need, free of charge.

“Our partnership with the Food Bank actually started about six years ago when we produced a holiday recipe brochure to go into the boxes at Thanksgiving,” she says. “Now we volunteer each month sorting shelf-stable foods or building boxes and filling them with food that generally will feed a family of four for seven to 10 days. It’s a wonderful way for us to serve food-insecure families in our area and make an impact alongside this important like-minded nonprofit whose mission aligns so closely with our own.

“You know, so many of us make our livings working with beautiful, delicious foods. I never take any of that for granted, and I know no one else in our organization does either, but working at the Food Bank reminds us of how fortunate we are not only to do what we love to do but also to have such easy access to amazing and nutritious foods. It’s also a great way to get to know each other better.”



Dames Cristina Almanza, Dulce Rivera, and Erin Isbell (at right) as well as Roz Bloomston, Idie Hastings, Kathy G. Mezrano, and Becky Satterfield were some of the members on hand at the gala event in the Food Bank’s warehouse (above).



The Menu

First Course
Smoked salmon, quail egg, crème fraiche, fried capers with bagel chip cleverly served in a tuna can by Iz Weddings & Events and Dame Kay Reed.
Paired with: Licence IV Rose, Provence, France, donated by Martin’s Wines

Second Course
Green salad with Snow’s Bend Farms shaved vegetables and preserved lemon vinaigrette from Hot and Hot Fish Club and Dame Idie Hastings and Dame Margaret Ann Snow.
Paired with: Marques de Caceres Verdejo, Rueda, Spain, donated by Vineyard Brands/International Wines and Beer

Entrée
Braised boneless beef short ribs from Tre Luna Catering and Dames Erin Mooney & Sara Walker along with spring risotto with asparagus tips, early spring peas and Parmesan Reggiano from Kathy G & Co. and Dame Kathy G Mezrano.
Paired with: Perrin Côtes du Rhône Rouge, Rhone Valley, France, donated by Vineyard Brands/International Wines and Beer

Cheese Course
Dame Lindsey Noto, Culinary Specialist at Sysco, put together a delicious and colorful variety of gourmet cheeses—English stilton, double Gloucester, Harmony white cranberry stilton and Auld Irish cheddar—served with Eastaboga honey, grapes and flatbread.
Paired with: Domaine Bernier Pinot Noir, Loire Valley, France, donated by International Wines



Above: The first course, prepared by Dame Kay Reed. At right: Fanoula Gulas, Joy Smith, and Telia Johnson were some of the Dames whose amazing sweets made up the dessert course.



Dessert
Assorted bite-size desserts.

- Dame Fanoula Gulas, of The Greek Kouzina: baklava
- Dame Joy Smith, of Sorelle Cafe: mini Pavlova
- Dame Kristal Bryant, of K & J’s Elegant Pastries: cookie butter and Oreo cheesecake
- Dame Amy Jason, of Cookie Fix: mini teacakes with a lemon glaze
- Dame Emily Nabors Hall, of The Breakup Cookie: chocolate chip cookies with coffee butter-cream filling

- Dame April McClung, of Emily’s Heirloom Pound Cakes: pound cake bites with fresh berries
- Dame Geri-Martha O’Hara, of Big Spoon Creamery: Sammies (mini ice cream sandwiches)
- Dame Telia Johnson, of Telia Johnson Cakes: classic chocolate fudge cake.

These beautiful desserts were paired with Saracco Moscato d’Asti, Piedmont, Italy (Provided by the Community Food Bank of Alabama/partial donation by International Wines).

Dames Judge Cake Contest



Dames Pam Lolley and Susan Swagler (top right) judged a cake contest for the Birmingham Historical Society on February 27 at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens.

They tasted some 20 cakes, baked to the theme of “Favorite Cakes from Childhood” and picked winners in the following categories: Most Beautiful, Most Vintage, Most Unusual, Best Memory/Story and Best Overall.

There were a number of pound cakes (including an almond sour cream pound cake that won Best Overall) and a delicious chocolate-spice pound cake made with creamed potatoes (Pam had never seen this sort of thing ever), which won Most Unusual.

One of several caramel cakes won Most Vintage. And a beautiful, boozy lane cake won Best Memory because of a fun story about a teetotaling Aunt Myrtle whose recipe has been passed down for generations.



Dames Plan FOOD+ Culture Fest 2023

by Leigh Sloss-Corra

Planning for FOOD+ Culture Fest 2023 has begun, and members of LDEI are leading the way.

A new major food festival for Birmingham, FOOD+ Culture launched with a “reveal party” in October 2022. This year’s event, scheduled for October 12-15, 2023 at Pepper Place, Sloss Furnaces, and other venues around town, will take place over four days, with five signature events, 10+ dinners, and over 50 invited featured chefs, mixologists, brewers, and more.

LDEI is a major partner for the event, along with *Southern Living*, Alabama Humanities Alliance, Alabama Tourism, the Birmingham Originals, Greater Birmingham CVB, Greek Food Festival, IACP, and Jones Valley Teaching Farm.

Birmingham Dames on the Board of Directors include Cathy Sloss Jones, Cheryl Slocum, and Leigh Sloss-Corra. Dame Rebecca Gann is the Festival Programming Director, and Dame Nancy Hopkins of the NYC Chapter, and former President of IACP, is also involved.

Highlights for the 2023 festival will include kicking the weekend off on Thursday with a ticketed ladies luncheon, presented by LDEI. The multi-course, seated lunch event will include an all-female chef lineup, and we’re hoping as many Dames as possible will be able to attend.

Friday’s main event will include a seated dinner in the streets of Pepper Place, celebrating Black culture, cuisine, and its influence on Black foodways, with guest chefs and presenters from around the Southeast. In future years, this same

Dames are involved in the planning of this year’s FOOD+ Culture Fest, which is happening October 12-15 at Pepper Place, Sloss Furnaces, and other venues around Birmingham. The event will be highlighting women in food, beverage, and hospitality throughout the weekend, and there are ways for Dames to be involved.



event will evolve by highlighting a different culture each year that has shaped Birmingham’s food identity—for example, Greek, Latino, Lebanese, or Indian.

Saturday will offer two events, starting with an amplified morning at the Market at Pepper Place, followed by an open-fire feast and celebration on the grounds of Sloss Furnaces, that afternoon, sponsored by *Southern Living*.

Sunday’s events begin at Sloss Furnaces with a biscuit brunch event in the morning, featuring biscuits, bakers, and live music. The afternoon will wrap up with “FOOD+ Breakin’ Bread,” celebrating the return of the popular Birmingham food festival,

presented by the Birmingham Originals.

Each evening, ticketed collaborative dinners will take place in participating restaurants around the city. Besides showcasing the talents of Dames in our own LDEI Chapter, FOOD+ Culture Fest plans to highlight women in food, beverage, and hospitality throughout the weekend. Dame-owned restaurants and bars can potentially be included in various ways.

The planning is happening now. Dames interested in learning more and participating should reach out to info@bhamfoodplus.com. And make plans to be in town! Again the dates are October 12-15, 2023. You don’t want to miss it!

Scholarship and Grant Applications Due Soon

by Jan Walsh

Applications for the Birmingham Chapter of Les Dames d’Escoffier International individual educational scholarships and entrepreneurial grants for 2023-2024 are now being accepted. Both applications have been open since January 2023. And March 21 is the deadline to apply for both the scholarships and grants.

Each educational scholarship is a minimum of \$1,000, and the entrepreneurial grants are \$5,000. Our membership is encouraged to “get the word out” regarding this impending deadline via word of mouth and social media. To date, more than \$120,000 has been awarded to women across the state pursuing careers in food and culinary.

Annual scholarships for education and continuing education are

Letter, continued from page 1

tion that is truly making a difference in our community, we get a funded scholarship, and our name and mission out in front of their powerful sponsors and partners. Another win-win!

What will we do with our successes and all this capacity? We have more programs coming up, opportunities to reach more deeply into the growing female food leaders of our city and state. People are learning about who we are and see the impact we are making. Other programs and businesses are looking to us for help. As Dames, we may end up being the glue that successfully brings this whole city together—how thrilling

available for female applicants at community colleges and four-year universities for culinary or pastry arts, farming, beverage management, hospitality, nutrition and dietetics, or agriculture. To be eligible for a Community College Scholarship, the female applicant must be in her first-year college coursework seeking a major in culinary arts/hospitality management major.

To be eligible for the Four-Year University Student Scholarship, the female applicant must be a junior at a four-year university. The funds are administered by the respective community college or university and paid towards the recipient’s tuition. And the recipients must volunteer at one or more LDEI events during the year.

Given the mission of LDEI Birmingham is to mentor and support women working in the

and gratifying!

I’m proud to be leading this chapter, and proud of each and every one of you for what you do. Nevertheless, I put a new year’s challenge to you, in the months to come, to do more. If you are a passive member of LDEI, change it. Come to the next meeting. Set something aside and make the extra effort to be part of the next amazing program. Call up a few of your sister Dames and meet for a drink or a coffee or a bite and get to know each other better. We are so lucky to have a quality network of people we can rely on, reach out to, and ask for support when we need it. Seriously, in LDEI, we have so much power right at our fingertips. I can’t wait to see what we do with it next!

food, culinary, and hospitality industry, our chapter also assists female-owned businesses in the industry with cash awards up to \$5,000 to expand and enhance each business. To be eligible for the Entrepreneur Award, the applicant must be a female business owner in the food, culinary, agriculture, or hospitality industries. The candidate must define and validate how her business plans will meet its mission and goals. And she must be willing to support and participate in Les Dames d’Escoffier events. Only applicants who complete applications with all required information and forms will be considered for this award.

If you have questions, reach out to Anna Theoktisto and the Scholarships and Grants Committee. Applications and details are available on the Birmingham LDEI website.

On the docket is Champagne & Fried Chicken planning. Look for the best ways for you to jump in and help now. LDEI membership season is coming up, too. If there are women you know that you think should be in this group, talk to them! Invite them to learn more and guide them if they want to apply. If you are questioning why there’s not more to do in our Chapter, read the emails and check the calendar. There are a million ways to plug in, but you’ve got to prioritize and make the time. I promise it will be worth it.

Sending beset wishes to you all, with spring around the corner, and all the possibilities it brings. Here’s to a great year for all of us together!

Leigh Sloss-Corra

New Membership Challenge

by Martha Johnston

Mark your calendars: May 1, 2023, when our Birmingham Chapter LDEI new member recruitment officially kicks off. And it’s up to all of us to help the Membership Team identify perspective candidates.

“New members are the lifeblood of our organization,” according to LaCrista Hutchinson, Vice President of Membership. “They bring new ideas and increase the power of the Birmingham LDEI Chapter.

“As the nomination period opens, think about women in all areas of food and hospitality... like those who have experience managing social media platforms as well as food and hospitality marketing. Events and planning are significant as well, since our primary fundraiser continues to grow each year. Most importantly, we need our new members to be engaged and willing to share of their time,” added Hutchinson.

Now is the time to look at the eligibility criteria: a minimum of five consecutive years’ experience in a culinary, hospitality, food, or beverage position is a must. And if your candidate’s work isn’t completely culinary in nature, then remember 75% of her work for those years must be culinary related.

Take time to talk with your potential nominee to make sure she



understands the mission of LDEI and that she has an in-depth passion for our mission. Tell her about our activities and expectations.

And remember, past and current Birmingham LDEI newsletters are available on our ldeibirmingham.org website. Walk through some of the newsletters with your candidate—it’s an easy way to tell our story, focus on community involvement, and discuss participation in our events and programs.

If you determine the potential nominee is excited and willing to participate in LDEI, then review the application process timeline with her and guide her through the entire process. And know that you will be mentoring this person through the first year of member-

ship. Be sure to make a note of the following deadlines for the membership process:

- **May 1:** Application information goes out to Dames
- **May 1-June 2:** Nominations and recommendation letters need to be sent to the Membership Chair
- **June 9:** Completed applications and additional letters of reference are due to the Membership Chair by 5:00 p.m.
- **July 14:** The Membership Team meets and schedules interviews for potential new members
- **July 21:** The slate of candidates is presented to the Board for approval
- **August:** The slate of candidates is voted on by the general membership at the annual meeting.

Events Calendar

Tuesday, March 21	Deadline for scholarship and grant applications	
Friday, March 24	Rane Culinary Science Center Tour RSVP by Friday, March 17	10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. 205 S College Street Auburn, AL 36830
Monday, May 1	New Membership Kick-off (details above)	
Wednesday, May 3	Launch Party: <i>Ashley Mac’s Kitchen</i>	4:00 to 6:00 p.m. The Cook Store 2841 Cahaba Road Mountain Brook
Sunday, October 1	Champagne & Fried Chicken Fundraiser	Pepper Place Market

Meet Our New Members!

Our chapter gained 12 new members in August 2022. Here, get to know more of these extraordinary women a little better.

Lindsey Noto

Place of birth: Birmingham, Alabama
College/professional school(s) attended, major/degree earned: Jefferson State Community College, Associates Degree in Culinary Arts and Hospitality Management
Current position: Culinary Specialist at Sysco
How did you get your start? At Sysco, I started as a sale consultation in January of 2020 and was promoted to my current position in October 2021. I started working in this industry at Sanpeggio's Pizza when I was 16 years old and just never stopped working in restaurants. I knew then that a career in the hospitality industry was not only my



passion, but it was what I was born to do.
What do you enjoy about your current position and the industry in general? I have what I would view as the best chef gig that could ever possibly exist: I create new food and new recipes every day, I have no budget or limit on products and ingredients I can work with, I get to help any and all of Sysco's customers grow their business through consultative methods, and I have nights and weekends which most chefs are not afforded.
What does success look like to

you? Success for me professionally, is when I've positioned myself in my career where I am able to help people, teach people, and see the results of my efforts.
If you could plan your last meal, what would it be? A big hot bowl of pho, crab rangoons, spring rolls, and sushi.
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 Thailand and eat my way through Bangkok and Chiang Mai.
Bonus: In October of 2022, I got married. My husband is working on getting his commercial airline pilot's license and work for United Airlines. Once this happens, I plan to live out my response to the previous question.

Christina Saab

Place of birth: Birmingham, Alabama
College/professional school(s) attended, major/degree earned: University of Alabama in Birmingham with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing.
Current position: Co-owner of Bistro 218 and Bocca Ristorante
How did you get your start? Bistro 218 opened in the Downtown Loft District in 2012 and I helped as much as I could while working in full-time. I decided to



take the leap in 2019 and retired from my corporate position in healthcare and joined Tom full time as we opened Bocca Ristorante.
What do you enjoy about your current position and the industry in general? I love being able to work with my family and run establishments that bring others joy. I learn something new every day and love it. It's an exciting time in Birmingham. I enjoy

being part of the downtown community and to have had the opportunity to watch and contribute to its growth and revitalization.
What does success look like to you? It's funny how that changes! Success for me use to be climbing the corporate ladder. Now it is about enjoying the ride along the way and giving back as much as I can.
If you could plan your last meal, what would it be? A bottle or two of bubbly, lobster poached in butter and risotto.

Bronnie Cox

Place of birth: I was born in Ozark, Alabama. It is a town between Troy and Dothan, the "big cities"!
College/professional school(s) attended, major/degree earned: I attended the University of Alabama with a Bachelor of Science degree in Education, my major was Sport and Fitness Management.
How did you get your start? After a year off and moving back to Ozark, my mom and I decided I MUST move. I moved to Birmingham and attended University of Montevallo and received a Master of Education degree. While in school I worked at P.F. Chang's and The Garage Cafe, that is when I got the taste of the service industry. After teaching for two years I knew I needed to move on, so I did! I jumped back in the service industry, with occasional breaks for sales jobs.
Current position: Currently I own and manage Bronnie's Brittle while working a couple of shifts at



Otey's Tavern in Mountain Brook.
How did you get your start? I started making brittle with my dad when I was in middle school, my first job! He had a business called Aunt Bronnie's Brittle and I was his only employee. He taught me the recipe and how to pack and ship the brittle. Later in life a friend gave me Bronnie's Brittle, LLC as a Christmas gift, so I ran with it! Luckily, I was able to sell at P epper Place, the best platform in Birmingham for new businesses and talents, and I haven't stopped wanting more!
What do you enjoy about your current position and the industry in general? My favorite part of my business is the challenges that come and go and come back again in different forms. I love to learn; I don't mind being the neighborhood novice, how else do I improve unless I try? Also, I love the community

that I have been blessed to have, so many people who have given me guidance out of the goodness of their hearts. One of my goals is to pay it forward as much as I can!
What does success look like to you? In very simple terms, success looks like being in love with your job! Going to bed on a Sunday night and not aching the next morning facing a new hard week or dead-end job. But being able to love what you do is my definition of success!
If you could plan your last meal, what would it be? Oooo, last meal is a hard one... Probably a cheeseburger from Chez Fonfon, followed by Breakup Cookies (several). I tend to have a sweet tooth!
If you had one week free of all obligations and \$5,000, where would you go and what would you do? With \$5,000 I would be on a plane to Greece or Italy or both if I planned it correctly! Both are on my bucket list for the food, wine, scenery, and locals who are willing to steer me in the best direction!

Carolyn Williams

College/professional school(s) attended, major/degree earned: Bachelor's degree in Food and Nutrition, Univerity of Alabama; Master's degree in Exercise Physiology, UAB; and Doctoral degree in Health Promotion, University of Alabama
Current position: Author of the *Meals That Heal* cookbook series, freelance health & nutrition journalist, co-host of the Happy Eating podcast, and faculty member at Shelton State Community College
How did you get your start? My first "big break" came when I



landed a summer internship in the Southern Progress test kitchen. I was then able to stay a few extra weeks to shadow Anne Cain on the editorial/nutrition side. Fast forward two years, I had just dropped out of medical school, and Anne happened to call to see if I might be interested in a position as a cookbook editor.
If you could plan your last meal, what would it be? Anything that someone else is cooking. Hopefully, they're cooking

an amazing pasta dinner with red wine.
If you had one week free of all obligations and \$5,000, where would you go and what would you do? Oh my goodness, I can't even imagine because that is so far from reality for me right now with a 12- and 16-year old! When and if I get to that point, I'm dying to go to Greece and Spain.
Bonus: I won a James Beard Journalism award in 2017 for an article on food's connection to Alzheimer's disease. The research for this is what eventually led me to my current focus—eating to combat inflammation.

Emily Tuttle-Shell

Place of birth: Mobile, Alabama
College/professional school(s) attended, major/degree earned: Auburn University, Spanish
Still need some credits!
Current position: Owner/general manager at Bistro V
How did you get your start? I started working in restaurants at age 16, at Klinger's.



What do you enjoy about your current position and the industry in general? I enjoy making people's life events and moments memorable and delicious.
What does success look like to you? Success looks like low employee turnover.

If you could plan your last meal, what would it be? Fried eggs over medium, maple pepper bacon, McEwan and Sons grits, sliced heirloom tomatoes.
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 St. Thomas and sit on the beach.
Bonus: I use my grandmother's and uncle's and mother's (and anyone who will let me) recipes to bake desserts for Bistro V.

Wine: Let's Go Shopping for Values

By Alexis Douglas, certified sommelier

We made it through the indulgent and expensive holidays. Then January hits and we may still be playing catch-up, nevermind new or unexpected expenses with a new year. No matter what time of year is most expensive for you, it's good to have some go-to wine values for those times you don't want to shell out as much for great-tasting sippers. I always say my mission in life is to find the best wine values; here are a few of my current favorites that are easy to find (the below are available at Whole Foods).
• **LaMarca "Luminore" Prosecco Congeliano Valdobbiadene D.O.C.G., Veneto, Italy \$19.99** This bottling is a step up from the "regular" blue-labeled LaMarca that is widely available. For only a few dollars more, you can enjoy their

higher quality, more complex bottling offering peach and floral notes.
• **Gobelsburg Gruner Veltliner, Kamptal, Austria \$18.99** A perennial favorite white wine of mine; so easy to drink, versatile, balanced and interesting. Medium-bodied, fresh, with apple and a hint of white pepper!
• **Amity Vineyards White Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley, Oregon \$22.99** White wines can be made from red grapes since the color of the wine comes from the skin. This is a fun, tasty white with a hint of color, that has flavors of Pinot Noir (think black cherry, pear and floral notes) but a lighter texture and structure.
• **Hahn Pinot Noir, CA \$12.99** Pinot Noir is notoriously the toughest grape to grow, which makes it very hard to find great ones at a fair price. This widely-available variety is my go-to for

the price point. Well-balanced, with lush fruit, vanilla and toasty oak.
• **Stolpman "Love You Bunches" Sangiovese, Santa Barbara, CA \$22.99** A fresh, young Chianti + Beaujolais = this fun, happy, delicious red. Meant to be served chilled and drunk young, this light red is made using carbonic maceration, meaning whole grape clusters stay intact during fermentation. This retains freshness and keeps tannins low. Perfect with a charcuterie board or pizza!
• **Maison Noir "In Sheep's Clothing" Cabernet Sauvignon, WA \$19.99** Classic style, with generous lush fruit, beautiful structure, incredible complexity and a touch of smokiness. The brainchild of an accomplished sommelier, this small-production Cab over-delivers and pairs perfectly with your favorite cut of steak!



A Trip to Germany that was a Quarter Century in the Making

by Susan Swagler

Before I get to the details of our time in Germany, I'll share why I wanted to go in the first place.

My grandfather, my Opa, was from Munich, and I grew up hearing about him hiking in the Alps. My Oma was from Nuremburg, and I grew up hearing about that historic city's landmarks, festivals, gingerbread, and sausages. My son grew up playing soccer and dreaming of playing in Europe (he eventually played in Germany and lived in Munich).

But my most enduring connection to Germany began at a dinner party in Birmingham 25 years ago.

My husband and I were guests, along with a couple from Germany—Norbert and Maria. They had met our hosts some 20 years earlier while on holiday in France. Maria's English was quite good. Norbert was awfully quiet.

I struck up a conversation with Maria and after they got back to Germany, she contacted me and suggested that our girls (her two and my older one) begin an email correspondence so they would have a friend in another country. (Maria has friends all over Europe since going to another country there is like us going to Florida.) She wanted her girls to have a friend in the States.

It was a good idea that never took off.

But Maria and I began to email each other regularly (sometimes weekly) for the next 25 years. Our



Maria and her daughters and I are in their backyard. Maria asked me to bring her the small American flag. Sandra and Maria are both wearing their dirndls. I'm wearing a scarf with a traditional Bavarian pattern.

children have benefitted from our friendship. Her daughter Linda came here one summer for a whirlwind cultural visit that included two galas (we got her a ballgown); a trip to Selma; an event where the late John Lewis spoke; and an unbelievable trip to New Orleans where she and I ended up at a small, private, interactive concert with the saxophone player from the Preservation Hall All-Stars. Then when our son, Brother, went to Germany for soccer, Maria and her family became his family abroad.

He even stayed with Linda and her boyfriend until he got his own apartment.

For years, Maria had urged Rick and me to visit. We first went several years ago when Brother was there, but our focus was mainly on him and his games. (During one of his matches, they played "Cotton Fields Back Home" during halftime, I kid you not.) We mostly stayed in Munich and spent only a few days with Maria and Norbert in Schwabmünchen where they live. (Those two days were full though; we



Left: The views of Munich from the top of St. Peter's are unmatched.

Bottom left: Rick and I are in an alpine meadow with the cows—right before that one behind us got up and chased us away.

Bottom right: Surfers ride waves in the English Garden in Munich.



visited Oberammergau, where the once-a-decade Passion Play is performed, ate at restaurants with no tourists except for us, and toured the glamorous, gold-gilded Schloss Linderhof (the smallest of the three palaces built by King Ludwig II of Bavaria and the only one he lived to see completed).

Our Munich highlights included touring various churches (and marveling at the bejeweled bones of martyrs in their glass coffins; the skeleton of Saint Munditia in St. Peter's is particularly dazzling, and

she holds a vial of dried blood.) We toured the New Town Hall (crazily making our way onto the balcony where Germany's national soccer team gathered after winning the World Cup); we stood there under the world-famous Rathaus-Glockenspiel waving to the tourists below in the Marienplatz.

We went to a bar in a boat set on an overpass (you read that correctly). We bought snacks in the Viktualienmarkt just outside the old city walls and had coffee in a cat café. We ate giant, delicious pig knuckles

at a table of strangers at Haxnbauer and drank beer at a table of even more strangers at Hofbrauhaus (the world's most famous beer hall). We spent a somber afternoon with Brother at Dachau—something we all felt we really needed to do. We walked through the English Garden (one of the largest urban parks in the world) to see the surfers, and visited the Residenz with Maria's older daughter, Sandra. Maria took the train to Munich, and we spent an entire day shopping for dirndls (the best souvenir ever!). Also, we

heard “Sweet Home Alabama” in one dress shop, I kid you not again.

A day trip to Nuremburg started with a breakfast of giant pretzels and a garlicky cheese spread called obatzda on the fast train with Linda. Once there, we toured that historic city, marveled at St. Lorenz’s Church and snacked on gingerbreads beside the 14th-century Schöner Brunnen (beautiful fountain) in the main market. We visited the Imperial Castle and toured a vast network of tunnels beneath the city (used for fermenting beer in the Middle Ages and later to escape the bombs during WWII). We drank red beer and ate the city’s famous, tiny bratwurst—about the size of your finger—cooked to order over an open flame and served “drei im weggla” (three in a bun). We even enjoyed hot mugs of glühwein at the end of our long day.

This past summer, though, we went back mainly to visit with Maria and her family. And she had spent decades planning this trip. As a result, it was incredibly personal and aimed at showing us a side of Germany most tourists simply don’t see. Her entire family participated. And in their beautiful Bavarian countryside, we lived like locals—totally immersed in that culture.

The first thing we did was go to a small town called Kempten with Sandra and Linda for a festival that the city had not had in two years of Covid. They were ready for it! The Allgäuer Festival (their fall festival) starts with an hour-long parade of the area’s music clubs and shooting clubs, alternating. We watched it from a café where some of us had beer, others had ice cream. Then we followed the last of the parade to the huge festival tent and beer garden and carnival (kind of a mini Oktoberfest) where we guessed



Susan and Rick visited Lindau and the Bodensee (Lake Constance) with its famous lighthouse and Bavarian Lion. The lion was covered with ribbons for a local festival.

there were only about two tourists present: Rick and me.

Another day, we took the train with Linda to Munich where she attended to some business and Rick and I walked around the city (that felt sort of like home) looking for the four remaining ancient city gates. We found them. We climbed the 299-foot tower of Saint Peter’s—Munich’s oldest church and some say the originating point of the city—for a grand view. We also ate Turkish food for lunch (the city has a large Turkish community). We ordered all wrong, but they were gracious and took great care of us. Our server even brought us cups of tea at the end of our meal—a traditional sign of friendship. We ended our great day with both Sandra and Linda and a sushi-and-beer picnic

on the grounds of the Nymphenburg Palace before taking the regional train back to Schwabmünchen.

The next day, we went on an epic hike in the Alps near Oberammergau where the hills echoed with the sounds of cow bells, and I felt the spirit of my Opa with almost every step. (It kept my mind off how hard this hike was.) This hike was 10 miles long and it took us seven full hours. We hiked through alpine meadows with happy cows (and one anxious cow that chased us). We climbed up hills with tree roots for footholds and up even higher hills each crowned with a huge cross. Three hours into the hike, we stopped at a hut (a restaurant) for beer to go with the picnic we had been carrying in our backpacks. All around us were stunning views of



On an epic hike in the Alps near Oberammergau, they were surrounded by stunning views and alpine meadows filled with happy cows.

the snow-capped Alps. It was just incredibly beautiful, and I felt such a huge sense of accomplishment at the end. Oh, and we saw a golden eagle.

The next day was a rest day (of sorts) when we drove to Lindau to see Bodensee (Lake Constance). The largest lake in Germany is bordered by Austria and Switzerland and is a popular place for Germans to go on holiday. We walked around the lovely harbor entrance with its famous Bavarian Lion sculpture and lighthouse (which we climbed since clearly, we had not done enough climbing). We visited the Church of St. Stephan, which dates to 1180 (with remodeling in 1782) and the Church of St. Peter (founded about 1000).

Another day we went to Dießen am Ammersee, which is also a pop-

ular place for vacations. The first historical mention of the village “Dießen” dates from 1039; the name means waterfall. It was incredibly picturesque with sailboats on the lake, cozy fish restaurants and one of the most beautiful churches we saw during the entire visit—the Baroque-style Marienmünster Church.

Throughout our trip, we enjoyed Maria’s delicious home cooking—her traditional and beautiful sweets, her homemade spätzle (unique to her region of the country; the distinction dates to the Middle Ages when Swabia was its own duchy). We had pretzels from the local bakery and cheese and liverwurst for breakfast. Norbert shared various local beers, all served in the appropriate glasses. That matters. He opened wines he had collected

on their summer trips to Italy and Spain. We toasted our friendship by looking intentionally into each other’s eyes. That matters, too.

Our last night with them, we went for dinner in a little town about 20 minutes away. The restaurant was in a 200-year-old barn and the servers all wore dirndls. Maria wore her dirndl. I should have brought mine. On the small menu: sauerkraut in pastry. It sounded so odd, I had to have it. It was amazing. And best of all, it was hyperlocal. Maria told me, “I’m so glad you ordered that. You can only get it in this town and the next one over. Nowhere else. Not even in our town. It is unique to here.”

It was a fitting end to a singular visit—a once-in-a-lifetime visit lovingly curated by a dear, long-distance friend.

Behind the Scenes: Anne Cain Finds the Right Recipe for a Satisfying Career

By Donna Cornelius

Dame Anne Cain's professional path has been full of twists and turns—and anything but dull. A registered dietitian and nutritionist, she's worked as a cookbook, magazine, and recipe editor; been a public relations director; and had a foray into the public health field. "I've really had three or four different careers," she said.

Anne grew up in Huntsville—but she wasn't a person who eagerly shadowed her mother or grandmother in the kitchen.

"My mom is a good cook, but my father was a picky eater, so we didn't eat a lot of fancy food," she said.

Still, her growing-up years had a heavy impact on her future. When she was 12 years old, she was diagnosed with diabetes.

"I had to learn a lot about healthy cooking and eating, and I figured, I might as well get paid for that," Anne said, laughing.

She also was involved at Camp Sumatanga, a United Methodist Church camp and retreat with programs for young people and adults. When she was a camp counselor during the summer of her junior year in high school, she was affected by the emphasis on social justice and world hunger issues.

"I was torn between Christian education and nutrition," Anne said. "And I was torn between going to Birmingham-Southern College and Auburn University. But I couldn't get a nutrition degree at Birmingham-Southern, and I really wanted to go to Auburn."



Anne is a die-hard Auburn fan, so she was thrilled to meet basketball coach Bruce Pearl at the Auburn School of Hospitality Management Gala in 2022.

She graduated from AU in the School of Home Economics' coordinated dietetics program and later earned two master's degrees, one in clinical nutrition and the other in public health, from UAB.

"I'm one of the few people I know who ended up in the careers they were interested in during high school," she said. "I felt I had something to offer people. It was a way to give back."

Early on, Anne worked as a clinical dietitian at St. Vincent's in Birmingham for three years and also as a nutrition coordinator for the Alabama Department of Public Health. But she discovered her niche through a job at Oxmoor House, the book publishing divi-

sion of Southern Progress.

"That's when I really found what I loved," she said. "I found my passion. I like to write and to organize pages. Writing for consumers is different than writing a term paper. It's important to write in a way to help people understand what they're reading."

She especially loved working on the "Successful Living with Diabetes" series.

"I like showing that even though you're on a healthy diet, you can still eat well," she said.

When Southern Progress was bought by Time Inc., she left the cookbook side of the company and switched to working on its recipe website, myrecipes.com.

"That put me into the digital world, and I loved that," Anne said.

Changes in the company led to layoffs, which meant a job hunt for Anne. She went to work as director of communications for the Southeast United Dairy Industry Association (now called the Dairy Alliance).

"That was a really hard job, and I was way out of my comfort zone," she said. "I had to write press releases and was responsible for disaster-relief efforts. We had a website and did recipe booklets. What I liked most was working with the dairy farmers."

When that position was eliminated, Anne again found herself in the market for a job. She landed one that was a good fit for her skills: Since 2017, she's been with Dotdash Meredith, America's largest digital and print publisher. Among its publications are *Southern Living* and *Food & Wine* magazine. As a senior content manager/editor, Anne develops, produces, and edits content for food and health-related newsstand special editions, such as *Cooking Light*, *Weight Watchers*, *The Keto Diet*, and *Food & Wine*.

"Each issue focuses on something specific, like soups or low-carb recipes," she said.

She handles the content, which includes previously published as well as new recipes.

"It's a service for the reader," Anne said. "This way, they can find all the recipes they're looking for on a particular subject in one place."

She loves the writing and editing process involved in each special issue.

"Sometimes recipes are well written; sometimes, not so much," she



In 2019, Anne (shown here with her husband, Hal) was named one of the Top Women in Alabama Media at the Business Alabama awards.

said. "I don't want the reader to have any questions, so I try to be meticulous about the steps and instructions. There's nothing more frustrating than getting halfway through a recipe and reading something like, 'Now add the beef that you've already cooked for five hours.'"

Over the years, Anne has enjoyed speaking to and sharing her knowledge with nutrition students. Dame Pat Terry and Donna Seibels, professors at Samford University, invited her to come and speak to their classes. She'd also return to Auburn, where she was on the nutrition and dietetics advisory board from 2014-2017.

"It's important for these young people to hear from somebody working in the real world and to learn about all the different options and directions that field of study can take you," Anne said.

Anne is married to Hal Cain and has a stepdaughter who lives with her family in Tallahassee, Florida. The Cains' roles as grandparents are a big draw for visits there; they have a granddaughter and a brand-new grandson, born Feb. 1.

In her downtime, Anne is an avid reader and likes to hike and walk. Another hobby is making cards to send to family and friends.

"I was really into the scrapbooking craze, which uses the same supplies and equipment," Anne said. "I think there's something special about getting a card that was made by hand."

She's been a member of LDEI for about seven years—but that didn't happen until after a few false starts. "The story is kind of comical," Anne said. "When they first started the Birmingham chapter, I got an email about an introductory meeting. But I had to miss it. I'm an active member of First United Methodist Church in downtown Birmingham and had another commitment there."

The next year, she missed the deadline for submitting her application. "And the following year, there was only one day set for interviews, and I couldn't go because I was volunteering that day at Camp Sumatanga," she said. "The next year, I finally got in!"

That's been a decision she's never regretted.

"I really love that it's such a supportive network of women, and a lot of organizations are not like that," Anne said. "I love that we're not just a group that only goes out for fancy-pants food and wine but that we have a focus on philanthropic activities—our scholarships, the WellHouse, and the food bank. It's a really encouraging group of incredibly cool women."

Let's Toast

After **Deborah Stone** and **Alexandra Stone Flowers**, mother-daughter duo, appeared on ABC World News Tonight with David Muir's "Made in America" 2022 Christmas feature, they created over 500 new gift boxes for viewers at their Harpersville Farm. Their Stone Hollow popcorn trio box also made Oprah's list for the second time.



LaCrista Hutchinson was recognized as US FOODS Gulf States Area Regional Sales Manager of the Year for 2022 in late January. She began her career with the organization in 2007 as a Territory Manager, progressing to District Sales Manager, before transitioning to her current role of Regional Sales Manager for the Montgomery market in October 2020.



April McClung of Emily's Heirloom Pound Cakes has a new showroom for pickup and office in Pelham where all their cakes will be made. The first order of business was to prepare 18 Heirloom Pound Cakes that were served at the Governor's inauguration in January.



Cheryl Slocum has been named Senior Food Editor at *Food & Wine* magazine at Dotdash Meredith. She was previously Senior Foods and Features Editor at *Allrecipes* magazine and Allrecipes.com. During her career as a magazine food editor, Cheryl first ran the editorial department and test kitchen at *Country Living* and later was a senior food editor for *Cooking Light*. She's a James Beard Award winner and has worked with a variety of clients including *Martha Stewart Living*, the Food Network, *Every Day with Rachael Ray*, *Skinnytaste*, and *Epicurious*.



Pardis Stitt along with Chef Frank Stitt and the Bottega team are celebrating being named a semi-finalist for the James Beard Foundation Award for Outstanding Hospitality. Finalists will be named on March 29 and the winners celebrated in June.



Ashley McMakin's debut cookbook, *Ashley Mac's Kitchen*, is now available for pre-orders for shipping and purchase in her cafés March 20-24. The book contains over 100 recipes, including her favorites, present and past. The Cook Store will host an event to celebrate the launch on



May 3. Hoffman Media's book imprint, 83 Press, is the publisher.

Geri-Martha O'Hara and her husband, Ryan, are launching their third retail location for Big Spoon Creamery in June 2023.



The new store will be in downtown Huntsville near two other Birmingham-based companies. Ironically, the store is the location they found when they searched pre-Covid.

Stacey Craig and the staff of The Bright Star are celebrating being named the Best Alabama Locally Owned Restaurant 2023 by *Southern Living* readers. The Bright Star opened in 1907 as a 25-seat establishment. It now seats 330 and is only a few blocks from where it started.



©2023 Les Dames d'Escoffier,
Birmingham Chapter
P.O. Box 43542
Birmingham, Alabama 35243

No part of this newsletter may be reproduced in any form without the prior written permission of the chapter president.

Newsletter committee members:
Martha Johnston (co-chair),
Rachel West (co-chair),
Jessica Bennett, Donna Cornelius,
Alexis Douglas, Leslie Register,
Leigh Sloss-Corra, Margaret Ann Snow, Susan Swagler, and Jan Walsh.