



Les Dames d'Escoffier
INTERNATIONAL



Founded in 2013

Ideibirmingham.org

Winter 2019

Celebrating the Success of Southern Soirée



President's Note: We did it!

Southern Soirée 2019 exceeded all our expectations. That in spite of having to change the venue. That in spite of a long holiday weekend. That in spite of the first rain and chill of the season.

That tells me that nothing can

stop us from creating an annual event that people will look forward to attending and supporting year after year after year. As a matter of fact, I think we've done that. Now we just need to keep it going.

Here are some of the numbers from our recent Soirée: We sold over 20% more tickets than last year and our net sales increased in the same proportion.

We made over \$6,800 from the silent auction (all monies collected and items and redemption info delivered by Wednesday after the Soirée) thanks to our new payment system!

Martha reports over \$40,000 from sponsorships and donations. We are an amazing team.

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Silent Auction is a Screaming Success!

By Susan Swagler

This year’s silent auction was twice as large as last year, and it brought in more than three times as much money! A huge thank you to all the Dames who donated their time and talents and wonderful spaces to this effort!

We raised nearly \$7,000 with this auction! And you and what you shared made it like none other—anywhere.

Thank you to Susan Green and Gia McCollister who braved the chill that night to make sure the bidding was steady—and moving steadily upward.

Our biggest auction item was Dame Pardis Stitt’s Bubbly & Boule at Chez FonFon for six. Highly popular (I saw my husband’s name on this bid sheet several times, as I asked), this experience sold for \$750 (a record for us).

Together, we raised over \$6,800 with this successful silent auction!

We did have a few items donated by our friends in the community, and we are grateful for them, too. Some of these folks, like Dean Robb of Blueprint on 3rd, gave without even being asked. His gift, in fact, was the starting point for taking the auction beyond Dame-led experiences, although those will always be our hallmark.

So, here are the specifics on the items and what they fetched:

- Three pieces of art by Victor Bokas (Sonthe Burge’s talented brother): \$535
- Private wine tasting for six plus cookbooks and an assortment of cooking tools from *Food & Wine* with Dame Mary-Frances Heck: \$400
- “Meet the Marys” bloody Mary gift box from Dame Deborah Stone: \$140



Our silent auction tables were brimming with experiences and items to bid on (very top), which included a tailgate package with a retro cooler (above). Dames Susan Green and Gia McCollister expertly oversaw the silent auction, and if you didn’t hear, Gia won her bid (left)!



- Good for You! Healthy cooking class with Dames Rosemary Dallam and Pat Terry: \$375
- Bubbly & Boule at Chez FonFon for six from Dame Pardis Stitt: \$750
- “My Birmingham” gift box from Madison Murphy of byndel: \$80
- Gourmet grazing board from Courtney Wright of Savor Style: \$150
- Behind-the-scenes tour of Meredith Food Studios for six from Dames Anne Cain, Allison Lowery, Pam Lolley, and Kate Nicholson: \$350
- Six months of IZ Café made-from-scratch dinner for two from Dame Kay Bruno Reed: \$325
- Apple pie workshop for four from Dame Susan Green: \$250
- Around the World on Green Springs Highway with Dame Susan Swagler: \$400
- Phyllo fun day with Dame Sonthe Burge: \$300
- Dinner for six at Blueprint on 3rd from Chef Dean Robb: \$425
- Professional tablescape from Dame Jan Gautro: \$100

- Behind the scenes and in the kitchen with Chef Chris Hastings and Dame Jan Walsh: \$600
- Biscuit baking with Becky from Dame Becky Satterfield: \$170
- Farmstead Laboratories natural wellness gift box from Dame Deborah Stone: \$200
- 90-minute private wine tasting for six from Scott Jones of Jones is Thirsty: \$300
- 2020 CSA Membership from Snow’s Bend Farm from Dame Margaret Ann Snow: \$350
- A Year of breakfast at Crestline Bagel Company from Dame Jennifer Yarbrough: \$260
- Instant tailgate with a retro cooler and legendary Dreamland ribs from Dames Cristina Almanza and Betsy McAtee: \$350

Again, thank you all for giving so freely and generously. Your donations not only make money for us, but they also help spread the word about who we are and exactly what we can do.



Dame Becky Satterfield auctioned off a biscuit making class in her home last year (very top) and again this year. (Above) Marjorie Perlman, chief marketing officer at Tacala, one of our sponsors, and Dr. Sherri Weissman survey the auction.

My sincerest thank you to everyone who helped make this happen. Kathy G's superb leadership pointed us in the exact right direction. The fact that so many of you showed up—with your delicious food, your skills, your hospitality and smiles, your friends, your sponsors, and your feet on the ground that day—leaves me proud and humbled.

Kay Reed very briefly pulled me aside that night and told me how happy she is to be able to work with such “amazing and professional women.”

As I watched two of our youngest members—Geri-Martha O'Hara and Brittany Garrigus Cheatham work next to each other under the tent, just inside of the rain (their conditions were not ideal), I was struck by their amazing positive attitudes and their absolute professionalism.

Amazing and professional women. We were everywhere at the Soirée.

The truth is: Not everyone gets the opportunity Kay was talking about. Not everyone has a network of smart, talented, determined women who will roll up their sleeves and work long and hard alongside you and then let down their hair and have fun with you, too.

Usually it's either/or. That's one of the things that makes our organization so special. Camaraderie and competence. All of you come to this organization with you own unique talents. There's a place for all those talents in our chapter.



We will begin planning next year's Soirée in a few months. Right now, my wish is that we have 100 percent commitment and buy-in from our membership. One hundred percent! That's a huge selling point when it comes to getting people outside our organization to sponsor us. That means everyone buys a ticket and everyone finds some way to contribute. You don't have to know how to cook for hundreds. You can help set up, or clean up, or welcome guests, or set tables, or distribute posters

around town, or donate an auction item, or commit to selling tickets or bringing in a sponsor or two or three. It is my hope that every one of you will find a way next year to be involved in this—our only real fundraiser. Make your plans now. Set that as a personal goal. There's room for everyone at the Soirée. Working together—all of us working together—is the only way, really, to sustain and grow this wonderful experience we've created. All the best! Susan Swagler

Party Pics from Southern Soirée!



Our chefs, some of whom are pictured at left, were the stars of Soirée—and some of the hardest workers there. Pictured: Carey Thomasson, Andrea Griffith, Ashley McMakin, Geri-Martha O'Hara, Brittany Garrigus Cheatham, Kay Reed, and Brittany's assistant, Bailey Howard. Those not pictured include: Mary Grace Viado, Maureen Holt, Kathy G. Mezrano, Deborah Stone, and Betsy McAtee. Thank you, ladies!

Our wonderful team of Dames organized and lead by Sonthe Burge greeted every Soirée guest as they arrived. They included Anne Cain, Pam Lolley, Kate Nicholson, Mary Esther Carpenter, and Rebecca Williamson. Many members also arrived early to help set up before the party started and stayed late to help clean up.





Above: Our amazing fundraiser leaders: Susan Swagler, Barbara Kenyon, and Kathy G. Mezrano. Top right: Nick Hartmann of Ice By Design created a stunning ice sculpture that was the focal point of the wine bar. At right: Kay Reed puts the finishing touches on dinner. Middle right: The harvest table, featuring a variety of beautiful appetizers and fresh produce. Below: Friends from far and near attended to show their support. Below right: Our signature cocktail, Yesterday's Joy, featuring Cathead Vodka, was created by Steva Casey of The Atomic Lounge.



Photos by Joe DeSciose & Mo Davis



Eileen Hallmark of Martine's Wines and Dame Rosalyn Bloomston (top left) served up the wines that were selected by Eileen and Dame Alexis Douglas, a certified sommelier. Back Forty Beer (above) was our beer sponsor again this year, offering two beer options for our guests. Some of our scholarship and grant winners (at left) were able to attend, and were welcomed and introduced by Dames Anne Cain, Susan Swagler, and Rosemary Dallam. They were also introduced to our guests during the program. Below: LeAnn Crowe, Jack Crowe, John White, and Margaret White, who is public relations director at Alabama Power, one of the sponsors of Southern Soirée.



Our sponsors were a vitally important part of helping us reach our fundraising goal this year. Sysco (top left) was our top sponsor this year! LuAnn Newman, Frank Schuster, and Sandy Hicks were able to attend. Other pictured sponsors: Cathead Vodka (above), which was featured in our signature cocktail; The Theodore (at left), including manager Isam Culver, Dame Mary Esther Carpenter, and owners Cindy and Ken Rhoden; and Lathrop Helmers & Associates (below left), including Judy Crittenden, Philippe Lathrop, Julie Helmers, and Eric Helmers.



Photos by Joe DeSciose & Mo Davis



*Photos by
Mo Davis*



The ongoing drizzle and the soggy grass beneath the beautifully arranged tent outside (top) didn't stop our Dames (pictured above)! Geri-Martha O'Hara served up two divine fall-flavored mini ice cream sandwiches (at left), while Brittany Garrigus Cheatham and her assistant, Bailey Howard, prepared French apple cake with maple Calvados sauce, crème fraiche Chantilly, and almond brittle (above left).



Welcoming New Members



On September 10, we celebrated our newest members with a reception at The Gardens Cafe by Kathy G. President Susan Swagler introduced each new member, and the group toasted to our bright future.

Meet Our New Members!

Our chapter gained fifteen new members in August 2019. Here, get to know the first six of these extraordinary women a little better. The remaining new members will be featured in the Spring 2020 newsletter.

Anna Threadcraft

Place of birth: Ghent, Belgium
College/professional school(s) attended, major, degree earned:
• The University of Alabama, Bachelor of Science (Nutrition, 2005)
• The University of Alabama at Birmingham, Masters in Nutrition Science (Graduation date, fall 2020)
Current position: University of Alabama at Birmingham employee wellness director
How did you get your start?
I’ve always had a love for food and in college, I also fell in love with a Canadian. He was the main reason I traveled to Nova Scotia, Canada and took my first job as a dietitian. It didn’t work out with the boy, but the job ended up being one of the best decisions I ever made. I returned to Alabama after seven years



and entered the world of corporate wellness and haven’t looked back. I enjoy helping people bring the pleasure back in food and learn how it not only impacts our body, but can be positively used to bring friends and family together to build community.
What do you enjoy about your current position?
I love empowering people (and women especially) to find freedom in their health. Sometimes people take extreme efforts to lose weight or see health results, but it’s more often the simple changes that make a difference and support long-term success.

What does success look like to you? Success looks like finishing well. Sometimes it goes unnoticed, but when I know I’ve faithfully followed through with a task or a goal I feel successful.
If you could plan your last meal, what would it be? It would probably be a poke bowl topped avocado and fresh ginger and drizzled with sauce.
If you had one week free of all obligations and \$5,000, where would you go and what would you do? An island, probably somewhere near Greece. I love fresh food, local music, sunshine and kind people, all of which are usually found on an island where travelers can stay to get away from it all.
Bonus: I am working on Arabic and would love to be fluent someday!

Donna Cornelius

Place of birth: Panama City, FL, but I grew up in Greater Metropolitan Reform, AL.
College/professional school(s) attended, major, degree earned:
The University of Alabama; bachelor’s degree with a journalism major and Spanish minor.
Current position: Freelance writer specializing in food writing. I’m also an adjunct instructor in UA’s journalism and creative media department.
How did you get your start?
Writing for my high school news-



paper and then for the Crimson White at UA.
What do you enjoy about your current position?
I love the people I meet and interview, especially when they are as wild about food as I am.
What does success look like to you?
Having someone I’ve written about get in touch to say, “Hey, that story really meant a lot to me.”
If you could plan your last meal, what would it be? A carb-loaded

Southern dinner like my grandmother used to make: fried chicken, rice and gravy, turnip greens with pepper sauce, squash casserole, fresh tomatoes, cornbread and Lane cake.
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 France and eat and drink until my money ran out (or I fell into a food-and-wine-induced stupor).
Bonus! My secret ambition is to be a contestant on “The Great British Bake Off” – which is a long shot because I’m not a Brit and I can’t bake worth a darn.



Debbie Mar

Place of birth: New Jersey
College/professional school(s) attended, major, degree earned: Penn State University
Current position: Area director at Newk's

How did you get your start? My first job at 15 years old was at McDonald's. I knew at 15 that I loved working in a restaurant.
What do you enjoy about your current position? For me it's about the energy at any given moment. That buzz that starts in the back of your mind when volume picks up and you know what's coming for you. That adrenaline rush when you know your team is killing it or the energy around righting a kitchen that has crashed—that is



what I love. In this industry we are always a part of someone's something. Someone has come specifically to us to celebrate something at any given moment. That's important. Creating the energy within a team that reflects that knowledge is my favorite thing to do, hands down.
What does success look like to you? Being able to show my children that regardless of your journey or your opportunities, you can do and be anything you want if you're willing to have exemplary work ethic and treat whatever you are doing as your own. My dad came to this country

and built a life that taught me the same, and being able to do that on a broader platform as a Hispanic woman will always be my greatest achievement.
If you could plan your last meal, what would it be? An Italian meal made in Italy—it's on my bucket list!
If you had one week free of all obligations and \$5,000, where would you go and what would you do? Attend a horse show in Wellington, FL.
Bonus: My other career when I was younger was as a professional horseback rider! I still compete as an amateur in the Adult Jumper division with my Irish Sport Horse, O'Lara. I have a small farm with chickens, goats, and a pig named Kevin Bacon.

Pam Lolley

Place of birth: Winona, MS
College/professional school(s) attended, major, degree earned: I graduated from Mississippi University for Women with a B.S. degree in elementary and special education
Current position: I am a recipe developer and tester for Meredith Corp. working for multiple print, online, and video brands (*Southern Living*, MyRecipes.com, *Cooking Light*, *Health*, *Eating Well*, *People*, *Well Done* (video division)).
How did you get your start? I started out doing personal baking for friends in 1993, which led me to form a small catering company which I did until 2002. I was hired by *Southern Living* in 2003 and



worked in their test kitchen until we made the move to our current Food Studios in 2016. We now come under the umbrella of Meredith Corporation working for all of their food brands.
What do you enjoy about your current position? I love the creative aspect of my job! No two days are alike and my projects vary from baking the "Big White Cake" (the Christmas cake for *Southern Living*), to developing health conscious recipes for *Cooking Light* or *Health*, or dessert recipes for MyRecipes.com. Variety is the spice of life!!!

What does success look like to you? Success to me is being content with who I am and doing what I love. In my mind, I am very successful!
If you could plan your last meal, what would it be? This is a tough one!! After marrying my husband we lived in Louisiana for nine years and I truly fell in love with the food of that region, so a table full of Creole and Cajun food.
If you had one week free of all obligations and \$5,000, where would you go and what would you do? I would eat my way through Italy!
Bonus! I have lived in five Southern states (MS, TN, GA, LA, and AL), I have been married for over 40 years, have four wonderful children, nine grandchildren and another one on the way!

Margaret Ann Snow

Place of birth: I was born in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and never imagined I would live here as an adult, but this is where the land I farm is. Now, I am glad to be here and do my best to make Alabama a great place for all people.
College/professional school(s) attended, major, degree earned: BA in anthropology with a minor in interdisciplinary environmental studies
Current position: Owner of Snow's Bend Farm
How did you get your start? Fresh from college, I completed an internship on an organic farm in Carnation, Washington, and then



returned to Alabama in 2004 to give farming a go here. My partner, David, and I entered the market at the perfect time and were welcomed and encouraged to keep farming.
What do you enjoy about your current position? I enjoy facing the challenges of farming and the ability to be creative in my job. Most of all, I love plants and working in the natural world.
What does success look like to you? Success to me is when young children are enjoying the farm, learning about growing, and eating the fresh fruits and vegetables.

If you could plan your last meal, what would it be? My last meal would depend on the season, since I exclusively eat what is growing in the garden. Summer would definitely be a BLT! In spring, I would want to eat strawberries right off the plant, still warm from the sun. For a fall meal, a sweet potato simply baked with salt and butter, and in winter, raw carrots and a kale salad, both of which have reached their peak sweetness after frost.
If you had one week free of all obligations and \$5,000, where would you go and what would you do? If I had a week free of obligation and \$5,000, I would first go tractor shopping and then go camping with my husband and kids.

Andrea Kirkland

Place of birth: Huntsville, AL
College/professional school(s) attended, major, degree earned: Auburn University: nutrition and food science, BS; Auburn University: Nutrition and food science, MS; The University of Alabama, coordinated program in dietetics
Current position: Owner and founder at Culinary Med Ed
How did you get your start? My first professional position in the nutrition field was with the Alabama Cooperative Extension where I taught nutrition education through food activities at local schools. But, it wasn't until I became a cookbook editor at Oxmoor House that my nutrition and culinary writing career fully began.
What do you enjoy about your current position? As an entrepreneur, I enjoy the excitement of exploring and learning how to implement new



ideas. Every day I'm discovering advancements in technology that can help me create food content and reach audiences in ways I had never imagined. Also, I love that I get to work from home, which gives me the freedom to set my own schedule for testing recipes, writing, and developing other food-related content.
What does success look like to you? I think success comes in many sizes and crosses all areas of life. But mostly, I see success as a series of milestones rather than one final result, because to me achievement involves consistently accomplishing tiny goals that are a part of a bigger vision. So, when I see success in others, I think that whatever was achieved probably took a lot of work and commitment behind the scenes.

If you could plan your last meal, what would it be? Probably a beautifully prepared, medium-rare hanger steak with a side dish of crispy smashed potatoes accompanied with a big glass of red wine!.
If you had one week free of all obligations and \$5,000, where would you go and what would you do? I would go to Argentina for a food and wine trip! I'd spend most of the time in Mendoza, going from vineyard to vineyard but would also savor a meal at Francis Mallman 1884. Then, I'd hop over to Buenos Aires and take in their restaurant scene and do some sightseeing.
Bonus! Most people would never know how much I love to fish and gather clams and oysters, especially on the northeast coast. I'm not crazy about cleaning the fish, but I do love to shuck oysters. My husband's sister lives on Cape Cod, so when we visit, which is only about once a year, we fish and clam and I'm in heaven.

Where Are They Now? The Sequel! Checking in with Our Scholarship and Grant Winners

By Susan Green

The updates on our 2018 scholarship, grant, and award recipients are still coming in. We asked them how the recognition by the LDEI Birmingham chapter has impacted not only their daily lives, but also their professional development.

Sydney Smith, then a junior nutrition and dietetics major at Samford University, received an education scholarship. She volunteered at the Christian Service Mission and the Center for Eating Disorders. Sydney was awarded funds from the Samford Student Government Association to develop healthy-cooking classes for Samford undergraduates.



“I graduated Samford this past May and spent the summer working at a children’s camp, teaching cooking and good nutrition to interested youngsters. This fall I am completing my dietetic internship at the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston.

“The scholarship was so incredibly helpful! It allowed me to reduce my amount of debt, make great Birmingham connections, and truly focus on my studies at Samford by allowing me to decrease the amount of hours spent working at part-time employment. I am incredibly grateful for the scholarship experience and being able to volunteer at Pepper Place and meet more Dames.”

Hope Etheridge, then a junior nutrition and dietetics major at Samford University, received an education scholarship, and served on the junior board of the Alabama Dietetic Association. She is focused on the seeking out and sharing of the benefits of healthy food choices for families.



“I graduated from Samford this past May with an undergraduate degree in nutrition and dietetics and am continuing my graduate education at Samford. I began a master’s of science degree and dietetic internship in August 2019. I am very excited to continue my education at Samford and live in Birmingham again.

“The scholarship was very helpful and was put straight towards my tuition for senior year! This allowed me to save a little bit of extra money and put it towards my graduate school tuition for this fall semester. LDEI Birmingham is still in my life. I will forever be grateful for that scholarship, because every little bit helps make going to college a little easier.”

Lauren Bolding, a certified ProStart teacher at Albertville High School was a recipient of one of the 2018 teacher grants. ProStart is a two-year high school program that reaches 140,000 students nationwide. It is a hands-on curriculum that provides practical, real-life experience, from culinary techniques to management skills and gives

students a solid foundation to pursue careers in the culinary arts. Lauren has had culinary arts teams compete at the National ProStart Competition in 2015, 2017, and 2018.

“I am beginning my 8th year teaching/instructing advanced culinary students that are in their second through fourth year in the program. We use the National Restaurant Association’s ProStart curriculum, developed to challenge and inspire students that have a passion in the foodservice and management industry.



“We have over 609 students enrolled in our culinary program; this speaks volumes to the future of our workforce! We test all of our students that pass a practice exam in ServSafe Food Protection Manager so that they will carry a credential and certification with them when they graduate high school. This allows them to stand out among other candidates in the industry.

“We are proud of what we do at Albertville High School, and we have exceptional support from our school system, community, and city leaders. Please feel free to visit our Instagram page and follow along with our progress at @ahsboldingculinary!

“Our LDEI grant monies were used to purchase a commercial-grade microwave oven for our Albertville High School culinary lab. Our students now have the

opportunity to perform tasks utilizing a commercial grade piece of equipment; it has been a tremendous asset to our growing program at Albertville High School.”

Melissa Allphin, a certified ProStart teacher at Moody High School, was a recipient of a 2018 and 2019 teacher grant. Melissa has had a culinary arts team compete at the National ProStart Competition annually since 2015.

“I used our grant monies to go to the National ProStart Competition. The monies helped to defray the costs so that we were able to have students compete on that upper level. By the way, we placed 17th out of 1,800 teams who participated on the state and national level!



“Rebecca Mhagama, who received one of your 2019 scholarships, was the captain of our team.

“Last year I also received grant money, and it went to purchase specialty equipment not normally in a culinary high school program: a foam charger, pasta machine, meat grinder. It helped so much.

“I had some thoughts about additional uses of grant monies. I would love to be able to sponsor students into our ProStart program; some students simply cannot afford the associated costs. Having a sponsored-paid scholarships would be a real-life advantage in helping these kids get ahead in the culinary arts.”

Dames Took Over the Demos



For the entire month of September, members of LDEI Birmingham, including Dame Andrea Snyder (top); Dame Ashley McMakin (left); Dame Geri-Martha O’Hara and her teammate, Keidel Hughes (her mom, Penny, was a Texas Dame); and Mary Grace Viado shared their expertise and recipes at the Saturday chef demos at the Market at Pepper Place. They were able to share information about LDEI and Southern Soirée.



The Future of Local Food: Conference Update

By Leigh Sloss-Corra

For farmers’ market leaders, fresh food distributors, and anyone interested in what the industry calls “direct sales”—how produce is marketed and sold with the least number of middle channels—the 2nd National Direct Agricultural Marketing Summit, hosted by the Farmers’ Market Coalition was THE place to connect, engage with, and learn from the best of the best leaders in locally grown and produced food.

As head of a producers-only farmers’ market, a champion of local, and a Dame, I found this conference, held in Chicago this past October, as informative and inspiring as any I’ve attended. The speakers and breakout sessions were forward-thinking and energizing. The overall lesson was that farms and local economies, the heart of our civilization and essence, are in peril, with climate stress and global consolidation as mounting threats.

There is a movement, however, to invest in and strengthen local food systems and economies, with help from sustainable farming practices, farmers’ markets, and other direct selling operations. Moreover, with knowledge gleaned from data about these systems, if we’ll do the work to collect and study it, we can understand the risks and plan for the future.

Three days of presentations left us optimistic about the possibilities. The following summarize some favorite sessions.

An early, well-attended talk focused on the rising popularity of cannabis and CBD products, which we can expect to see flood the marketplace over the next few years,



(Left to right): Leigh Sloss-Corra, executive direction of the Market at Pepper Place; Raghela Scavuzzo of the Illinois Farm Bureau; and Pepper Place Market Manager Lisa Beasley attended the 2nd National Direct Agricultural Marketing Summit in Chicago.

despite or perhaps because of the federal government’s inability to figure out how to regulate it. Mac Condill, of The Great Pumpkin Patch, shared how his commitment to diversified pumpkin growing (his family raises over 300 varieties, more than any single farm in the world) transformed their struggling family farm into an internationally famous and thriving destination that teaches visitors the value of living off the land.

Another extraordinary session was led by Chris Wayne and Eric Hassert of Grow NYC, who demonstrated how human behavior analysis can help farmers’ markets and vendors engage customers and increase sales. Their presentation would be invaluable to any business serving the public and, to that end,

they plan to take it on the road, possibly to our farmers’ market network here in Alabama.

Other sessions addressed the challenges of converting social media followers into actual customers; the value of CSAs; and how collaborating with rival markets can be a win for all.

Lessons in innovation were shared by three agri-entrepreneurs: MightyVine, an ambitious Illinois farm producing organic locally-grown vine-ripened tomatoes at enormous scale; Hodo Foods, a California-based organic tofu producer whose passion and commitment to quality are transforming the way we think about plant-based protein; and Local Foods, a Chicago food distributor curating and delivering high-

quality locally-grown organic produce and food products to top Chicago restaurants, grocery stores, and specialty markets.

This conference demonstrated at every level that the local foods movement is growing fast, and we need to keep pace. The lesson in almost every session was the same: pay attention to your business, whether it’s growing, producing, selling, or serving food. Take advantage of digital tools to gather data about how your business operates and use the resources of the Farmers’ Market Coalition and others to analyze it so you, your farmers and your customers will be more successful.

It’s such a simple idea. It can truly move our economy forward. The research also shows that if we don’t follow this advice to help our food systems survive and thrive, the result could be disastrous. A favorite FMC quote from Canadian activist Naomi Klein summed up the call to action: “The future is radical. We face a stark choice between radical, disruptive changes to our physical world or radical, disruptive changes to our political and economic systems to avoid those outcomes. The status quo is not one of the options on the table.” Here’s to mastering data about local food and changing the world for the better.

Sneak Peek Wine Tasting at Hop City

By Susan Swagler

On September 18, Alexis Douglas arranged for a “sneak peek” wine tasting to whet our appetites ahead of our Southern Soirée. Alexis is a certified sommelier, a member of the Guild of Master Sommeliers and the owner of Lexlovesvino Consulting.

She partnered with Eileen Hallmark of Martine’s Wines for a progressive tasting of a varied selection of French and Portuguese wines imported by Martine’s. Here are the wines we sampled:

- Domaine du Seminaire: Valreas Cotes du Rhone Villages 2018
- Niepoort Rotulo Tinto, Dao, Portugal 2016

- Niepoort Docil Vinho Verde Loureiro 2018
- Morey Domaine Coffinet 2015 Bourgogne Chardonnay
- Cremant de Loire Purete de Silex Brute

Leigh Sloss-Corra, Kathy G. Mezrano, and Susan Swagler were among the Dames who stopped by Hop City to chat with other visitors (and tell them about Soirée and hand out our book-marks with all the info), sample these awesome wines and take home a bottle or two.

The event was casual and informative and certainly put everyone there in the mood for a soirée!



Susan Swagler and Kathy G. Mezrano joined Eileen Hallmark of Martine’s Wines to taste wines selected by Alexis Douglas at Hop City as a preview to Southern Soirée.

Downtown Visionary: Cathy Sloss Jones

By Anne Cain

Dame Cathy Sloss Jones was featured on the cover and in the September issue of *Business Alabama* as a leader in the revitalization of downtown Birmingham.

As president and chief executive officer of Sloss Real Estate (her family's business that was formed in 1920), Cathy led the effort to create a new business community in the Lakeview District with the development of Pepper Place and the Martin Biscuit Building.

In 2000 she teamed up with local chefs Frank Stitt and Franklin Biggs to help start a weekly farmers' market at Pepper Place. There were only seven vendors at the first market; now there are over 100.

Cathy and her sister, Dame Leigh Sloss-Corra, executive director of the Market at Pepper Place, both grew up hearing stories about visionary business leaders in Birmingham and have never flagged in their enthusiasm and passion for the city. "Cathy was way ahead of the crowd in the revitalization of the Birmingham's urban core," says Sloss Real Estate COO Tom Walker. "I enjoy being around her because she is so passionate about this city."

And it appears that Cathy is just getting started. There are a series of projects in the works for development along the railroad tracks that



run through the heart of the city and a master plan for a Sloss Industrial Arts District. Congratulations to Dame Cathy Sloss Jones for this statewide recognition of your vision and your passion.

Excerpts from "Maker of Places", Business Alabama, September 2019, Cary Estes

As Seen on TV: New Dame Raquel Ervin Cooks for Le Dîner en Blanc and on the Food Network

By Donna Cornelius

When Le Dîner en Blanc held its first Birmingham event, one of the newest Dames had a starring role.

Chef Raquel Ervin was in charge of food and beverages at the posh pop-up dinner on Oct. 5. Some 900 white-clad guests turned out for the outdoor party that's become an international attraction.

Raquel's Le Dîner en Blanc menu included smoked lox with a caper-cream cheese aioli over toasted bagels, oven-roasted beef, and cheddar ciabatta sliders with Carolina Gold mustard sauce, and—an especially big hit with the foodie guests—a summer salad with spinach, heirloom grape tomatoes, shredded carrots, goat cheese and pralines.

This isn't the first time Raquel, the owner of Panoptic Catering, has been in the spotlight. She's competed on Food Network's "Family Food Showdown" with her sister and niece and on Cooking Channel's "Snack Attack."

"When someone from Food Network called to ask me to be on the show, I thought it was a joke," she said. "Then I got an email from them, and I thought, 'This is real!'" Raquel said "Family Food Showdown" host Valerie Bertinelli and judges Clinton Kelly, Antonia Lofaso, and Isaac Toups were "very down to earth."

"They're people who eat really good food all the time, and they said they were amazed to get Southern soul food from such a young chef," said Raquel, who's 34.

If you saw either show, you'll know that the Mobile native looked like a



Above: Chef Raquel Ervin did a segment on ABC 33/40 talking about her Food Network debut. At right: Raquel (center) and her Panoptic Catering team at Le Dîner en Blanc.



seasoned TV pro. She attributes her self-confidence to her mother.

"My mom always let me try whatever I wanted to do," Raquel said. "She's pushed and supported me my whole life."

Her Panoptic Catering company offers delicious food for events like weddings, cocktail parties, baby showers, and corporate functions. She has 14 staff members who work as needed. She said her company's name is "something that reflects me—'panoptic' means all-inclusive, fully visible and seen by all."

Raquel, the mother of sons Ethan, age 6, and Aidan, who's 3, said she already feels at home in the LDEI Birmingham chapter.

"I knew this would be a group where I could grow, that has people like me, that was big on internships, and that was organized and well put together," she said. "Here, I can be me."

(If you missed seeing Raquel on "Family Food Showdown," you can find the series on Amazon Prime. She was in Season 1, episode No. 2.)

Wines to Celebrate the Holiday Season

By Alexis Douglas,
certified sommelier

There’s finally a chill in the air, and the holidays are quickly approaching. This time of year, we primarily need tasty and reasonably-priced wines to serve a group or to bring as a hostess gift. If anyone needs a special bottle to give as a gift, please reach out to me directly and I’d be happy to help. My favorite spots nowadays to buy wine are Golden Age in Mountain Brook Village and Hop City at Pepper Place.

BUBBLES

Raventos I Blanco, Spain (\$17) is my go-to sparkling wine for serving a large group and for Champagne cocktails. I prefer Spanish sparkling vs. Prosecco; they are similar in price, but not flavor profile. Prosecco is fruity and soft, while Spanish bubbly tastes much more like Champagne (complex, lively, mineral, dry), so offers more balance when mixed into a cocktail. Raventos I Blanco is considered one of the best quality producers from this region.



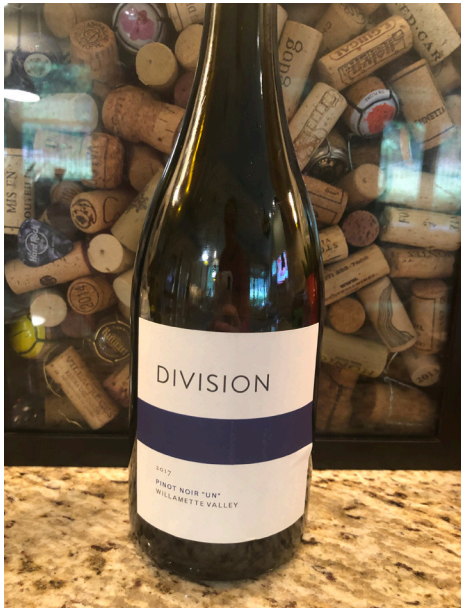
When your event, holiday celebration or gift calls for true Champagne, seek out Coquillet “Carte D’Or” Champagne, France (\$55) for an incredible value. Small-production, organically-grown in limestone, and hand-crafted using 70% Chardonnay and 30% Pinot Noir, this fabulous bubbly was the stunner we served at the Soirée. Fresh and lively, yet super complex with a super long, elegant finish.



REDS

Licence IV Grenache, Rhone Valley, France (\$19) is the red we served at the Soirée! It’s brand new to the market, but can now be found at the Pig (although most wine stores will special order available wines for you if they do not carry them already). It’s easy drinking with a silky texture but interesting with dark berry and savory herb notes... and comes in a convenient 1.0 liter bottle, making it a great party choice. Division Wine Co.

“Un” Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$28) is the most incredible Pinot I’ve had recently for the price. A blend of organically-grown



fruit from multiple acclaimed vineyards, the complexity, density and texture are like a wine at least double this price! This particular small-production Pinot Noir will be making an appearance on my Thanksgiving table for sure, and I will pick up a few to share with friends as well.



WHITES

I have two new favorite Chardonnays that are totally different in style, but both are crowd-pleasers! Chardonnay is the best “cocktail wine” since most people enjoy the bold flavor and rich texture, especially when the weather turns. Justin Girardin Bourgogne (\$17) is beautifully balanced with pretty apple, mineral and subtle oak, and Presqu’ile from Santa Barbara (\$20) is rich with intense tropical fruit, spice and caramel notes. Cheers and Happy Holidays!

.....Events Calendar.....

Monday November 18	6:00-7:30 Kathy G’s Gardens Café \$20 members/ \$25 non-members	Holiday Herb Cocktail Class with Feizal Valli & Rachel Roberts
Sunday December 15	4:00-6:00 TBD	Holiday Party *Bring a new cooking utensil for WellHouse
Sunday January 12	3:00-5:00 El ZunZún	Better Cell Phone Food Photos with Becky Stayner

Bham Dames spread the word about LDEI at the BBJ’s Women’s Summit

Members of the Birmingham chapter of LDEI attended the Birmingham Business Journal’s Women’s Summit in September that brings together business women from around metro Birmingham for a day of networking, keynote speakers, and power sessions. The LDEI booth, filled with tasty samples from some of our members (including Ashley McMakin, Brittany Garrigus Cheatham, Debbie Mar, Carey Thomasson, Rebecca Williamson, Linda Croley) was popular! Dames Susan Swagler, Leigh Sloss-Corra, Stefanie Maloney, Kathy G. Mezrano, and Rachel West were able to share information about our chapter, our mission, and details about Southern Soirée ahead of the October fundraiser.



LDEI Bham sponsors Sidewalk Film Festival

By Leigh Sloss-Corra

At the 21st Annual Sidewalk Film Festival in August, LDEI's Birmingham chapter sponsored and presented "Alabama Foodies," a program of seven short documentaries about food in Alabama, all directed by female filmmakers. Dames came out to spread the word about LDEI and promote the upcoming fundraiser for the two sold-out shows, held in the Alabama School of Fine Arts and the brand-new Sidewalk Cinema.

Dames Becky Satterfield and Kristen Farmer Hall were featured in one of the shorts. Samples of kettle corn were handed out to attendees and were provided by Tanesha



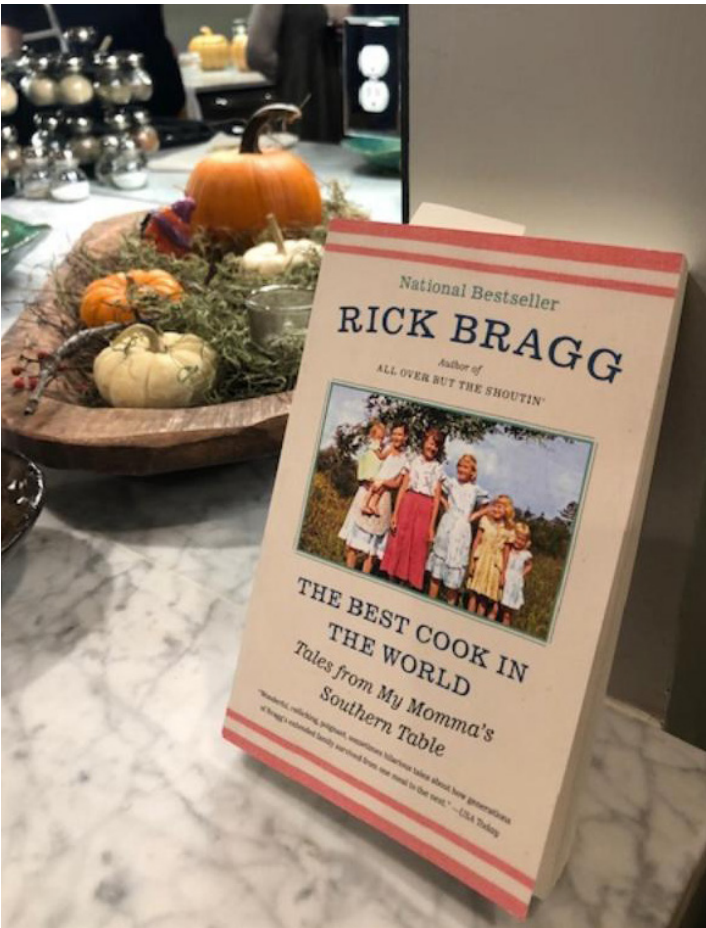
Sims-Summers of Naughty But Nice Kettle Corn Co., the LDEI 2019 Female Entrepreneur Award Winner. This is the third year the Birmingham chapter has sponsored a ma-

jor food-focused film program at the festival. Sidewalk is held every August in downtown Birmingham and attracts approximately 14,000 attendees each year.

Birmingham Book Club reads Rick Bragg's latest



Members, including Charbett Cauthern and Rebel Negley (above), gathered at Dame Mary Esther Carpenter's home to discuss Rick Bragg's latest book, "The Best Cook in the World," which shares stories from his family's culinary history. The October 28, gathering featured a tasting of Dames' favorite recipes from the book.



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

Andrea Griffith has accepted a position as vice president of operations at Sea Palms Resort & Conference Center in St. Simons, Georgia. She is also a new co-owner of Pelican Pizza Company in Darien, GA. Andrea is transferring her LDEI membership to the Savannah/Coastal Georgia chapter.



Andrea Snyder, chief creative officer of Urban Cookhouse, has announced that Urban Cookhouse has gone mobile and launched their first food truck in Tuscaloosa. UC is excited to serve the student community for lunch and will be accepting Dining Dollars and Bama Cash. In the evenings, the truck will be parked in neighborhoods that don't have easy access to UC and at special events.



Kathryn Strickland has accepted the position of chief network officer at Feeding America in Chicago, the third largest charity in the U.S. Feeding America is a nationwide network of 200 food banks that feeds more than 46 million people through community-based partners and direct meal programs.



In this new role that begins in December, Kathryn will be charged

with fostering innovation, providing resources, and building capacity across this nationwide network of food banks. She will oversee research, innovation, network fundraising services, member grants, network learning and capacity building.

Leigh Sloss-Corra, executive director of the Market at Pepper Place, and her staff teamed up with the City of Birmingham, The Birmingham Jefferson County Transit Authority, and ADECA to create a new farmers' market at the Birmingham Intermodal Station.

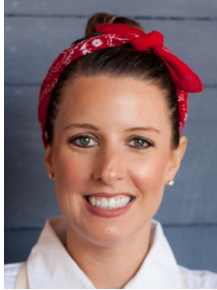


The Birmingham Central Market opened on October 30 and is the first of its kind in the state, serving lower-income city residents, transit riders, and people working in downtown, including nearby UAB. The market will be held weekdays from 12:30-5:30 p.m., with the goal of addressing the problems of food deserts and inequity in the city. The market will be open through mid-November and resume operation after the holidays in mid-January.

Farmers will sell fresh produce only, and SNAP/EBT benefits will be accepted with matching Double Bucks, thanks to a grant made possible by Dame Kathryn Strickland, executive director of the Community Food Bank of Central Alabama.

Geri-Martha O'Hara of Big Spoon Creamery has opened a new division, Big Spoon Bakes. The new service will feature modern, elegant cakes for any and all special occasions requiring a special cake, including elegant bridal cakes.

Geri-Martha and her team are already receiving compliments on their delicious cakes, available for holiday and year-round events.



Kristen Farmer Hall of The Essential and the newly opened Bandit Pâtisserie was among a stellar lineup of guest chefs at the Harvest Wine and Food Festival Oct. 25-26. The event at Florida's WaterColor Resort also featured Hugh Acheson, a James Beard Foundation Award winner and "Top Chef" judge; David Bancroft of Auburn's Acre restaurant; Asheville, N.C. pastry chef Kaley Laird; and other celebrity chefs and vintners. At the festival's Al Fresco Reserve Tasting on Friday night, guests enjoyed Kristen's roasted beet piri piri with peanut lime gremolata on a house-made potato chip.



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