DOUBLE DECADE

RESTAURANT OWNERS

Dames share their secrets of long-lasting success
Me own a restaurant? Not on your life!

I have a lot of “invisible” friends who own restaurants. I say, “invisible,” because it’s nearly impossible to go out with them socially. They seem wedded to their establishments or must respond to emergencies, such as hemorrhaging water heaters, power outages, staff shortages, chefs quitting, etc. One time while I was living in Houston, I invited one of my Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority sisters out for dinner AT HER OWN RESTAURANT in order to see her. (Yes, I paid the bill!)

So for the spring issue of the Quarterly, I decided to interview Dame restaurant owners to learn how they got into, and stayed in, business. I downloaded the Restaurateurs from the Professions listing in the LDEI Member Directory and found more than 140. How to choose whom to interview? Well, I narrowed it to 10 Dames who have owned successful restaurants for more than two decades and who represent 10 different chapters of LDEI. Read their stories on pages 4-13.

The longest-lived restaurant is 112 years old and is owned by Laura Maioglio (New York). No, of course, she’s not more than 112-years-old, but she took over the family’s 56-year-old Barbetta Restaurant and has kept it winning awards for 56 more years—and counting. My toque’s off to her.

I have a confession to make. My husband, John Kelly, and I don’t go out to restaurants often because I love to cook at home. Besides, we have a deal: I cook, he cleans up! Such a deal! Most of the restaurants I visit are host to my Washington, D.C., Chapter’s great events, which is to say, Dame-owned. But John and I do travel a lot. And after interviewing only these 10 Dames, I can say that if I’m in their cities, I will definitely dine there as well as support other restaurants owned by Dames.

One of the brilliant things about LDEI is that, through our many professions, we help each other. We can write about restaurants, cook in them, edit or write cookbooks, plan events, do TV or radio interviews—the list goes on.

I am in awe of these powerful women who control the many facets of the restaurant business. A suggestion from me: Take a restaurant owner out for dinner! Bon, bon, bon appetit!

—CiCi Williamson, Editor, Spring Quarterly

On the cover: The main dining room of Barbetta Restaurant in New York City owned by Laura Maioglio (see page 4-5).

Right: The Seattle Great Wheel. Will it be the Brock Circle for a day? Photo: Cynthia Nims. New York Dames Joan Brower (Chapter President), Janeen Sarlin, Rita Jammet, Deborah Mintcheff, and LDEI President Hayley Matson-Mathes (Hawaii) socialize at the LDEI Board Meeting (see pages 16-17). Photo: Mike Mathes
**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

**Tiny is the Flower Yet It Scents the Grass Around It**

Happy Spring! I love living in Hawaii where flowers and natural beauty – celebrated year-round – are the focus of a unique May 1st Lei Day tradition. The song whose lyrics follow is performed by Hawaiian school children during May Day hula programs recognizing the history of the Hawaiian monarchy and the beauty of the Hawaiian Islands.

*May Day is Lei Day in Hawaii
Garlands of flowers everywhere
All of the colors in the rainbow
Maidens with blossoms in their hair
Flowers that mean we should be happy
Throwing aside a load of care
Oh, May Day is Lei Day in Hawaii
May Day is happy days out there*

There is something very special about giving a lei and about accepting a lei. A lei is a gift from the heart with the lei flower being selected depending upon the occasion and the person. This beautiful gift of aloha reminds me of my childhood tradition where my mother and I carefully crafted May baskets filled with flowers and home baked cookies/breads to share with elderly neighbors. Whatever your springtime tradition, take a moment to smell the flowers and share with those in your community.

An appropriate Hawaiian saying, “Tiny is the flower yet it scents the grass around.” Too often, we underestimate what we can accomplish. One Dame or one chapter of Dames can make a significant impact on our community and our world. Sharing with the next generation through planned giving is but one way to make a difference. The stock donation program allows for donation of stocks, bonds, or mutual funds directly to Les Dames d’Escoffier International. Visit the members only section of www.ldei.org for details. LDEI also welcomes gifts from wills and trusts.

The first quarter of the year was dedicated to connecting with chapters and meeting Dames one-on-one. To experience a taste of winter, I traveled to Washington, D.C., in December. I connected with the San Francisco, Sacramento, and Monterey Bay Chapters at Wente’s Murrieta’s Well Winery. Mahalo to Amy Hoopes for hosting. A late February visit to the gracious Houston Dames capped off the quarter. There are more chapter visits (at Board Member’s personal expense) planned by the LDEI board.

January included a visit to New York for our LDEI Board meeting and a visit with the highly accomplished New York Chapter. The song, “New York! New York!,” is apt encouragement to start spreading the news about LDEI in your community. The focus of our dynamic board meeting was collaboration, strategic visioning, tangible deliverables (including a refresh of the LDEI brochure), and service to our chapters. Your LDEI board is committed to working closely as a team to deliver on our robust plan to connect Dames across the globe while fostering the growth and success of our organization and YOU. As Dames we are part of a network that is much larger than our individual chapters – our reach and power is awe-inspiring.

It was very appropriate to plan for the future of LDEI in New York City, where Carol Brock’s foresight led to the founding of our organization. Please join us as we build a framework for the future! Aloha,

Hayley Matson-Mathes
President, Les Dames d’Escoffier International

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**2018 LDEI BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

The mission of the LDEI Board is to foster the growth and success of the organization by supporting the development of new and existing chapters and by implementing program initiatives. It provides leadership, guidance, education, connectivity, and effective communication among LDEI members.

**President**
HAYLEY MATSON-MATHES
Owner/Culinary Consultant
2333 Kapilolani Boulevard #3516
Honolulu, HI 96826
(808) 941-9088  hayleym@hawaii.rr.com

**First Vice President**
ANN STRATTE
Lobster and Lox LLC
100 Severn Avenue, #506
Annapolis, MD 21403-2622
(410) 903-2682  annstratte@gmail.com

**Second Vice President**
BEV SHAFFER
Owner/COOK.WRITE.TRAVEL.REPEAT.
Culinary Consultant | Recipe Development
R & D | Food & Travel Writer
3433 Blake Road
Seville, OH 44273
(330) 441-2706
bev.foodwithattitude@gmail.com

**Third Vice President**
KATHY GOLD
President/Executive Chef
The Cooking Company/
In The Kitchen Cooking School
10 Mechanic Street
Haddonfield, NJ 08033
(609) 206-4511  chefkage@gmail.com

**Secretary**
DEBORAH MINTCHEFF
Cookbook Editor/Writer/Certified Life Coach
129 East 69th Street
New York, NY 10021-5041
(201) 879-0383  domintcheff@gmail.com

**Treasurer**
SHARON OLSON
Culinary Visions Panel
445 W. Erie Street, Suite 107
Chicago, IL 60654
(312) 280-4573  sharon@culinaryvisions.org

**Chapter Board Liaisons**
JULIE CHERNOFF
Dining Editor, Make it Better Media
200 Burnham Place
Evanston, IL 60202
(847) 902-6741  jcherloff@sbcglobal.net

**Immediate Past President**
STACY ZEIGLER
Director of Sales, Bold Catering & Design
2160 Niles Place NE
Atlanta, GA 30324
(678) 938-3196  szeigler1949@yahoo.com

**Executive Director**
GREG JEWELL
President, AEC Management Resources
P.O. Box 4961
Louisville, KY 40204
(502) 456-1851 x1  info@ldei.org
In 2017, the United States had over one million restaurants; Canada, 95,000; and the U.K., 84,000. American restaurants are staffed by 14.7 million employees, and restaurants are a $799 billion industry, according to the National Restaurant Association’s “2017 State of the Industry.” Nearly half of all adults have worked in the restaurant industry at some point, and 46 percent of restaurant employees say they would like to own a restaurant someday. No one dreams of owning a failed restaurant, though, but figures estimate that between 19- and 60-percent of restaurants fail during their first year. In LDEI, more than 140 Dames are successful restaurant owners. Thinking of opening a restaurant? Read their stories and see the advice from Dames who have owned thriving restaurants for decades.

**DOUBLE DECADE**

**RESTAURANT OWNERS**

Dames share their secrets of long-lasting success

**By CiCi Williamson**  
(Washington, D.C.)

In 2017, the United States had over one million restaurants; Canada, 95,000; and the U.K., 84,000. American restaurants are staffed by 14.7 million employees, and restaurants are a $799 billion industry, according to the National Restaurant Association’s “2017 State of the Industry.” Nearly half of all adults have worked in the restaurant industry at some point, and 46 percent of restaurant employees say they would like to own a restaurant someday. No one dreams of owning a failed restaurant, though, but figures estimate that between 19- and 60-percent of restaurants fail during their first year. In LDEI, more than 140 Dames are successful restaurant owners. Thinking of opening a restaurant? Read their stories and see the advice from Dames who have owned thriving restaurants for decades.

**THINKING OF OPENING YOUR OWN RESTAURANT?**

Take the advice of these nine successful Dames who have owned theirs for a total of 397 years. Read their stories on these pages.

If your restaurant follows the cuisine of a particular region or country, the food should be true to the way food is prepared there. If a dish is a totally new creation, its roots must be identifiable in its taste—that is, its “pedigree” must be recognizable. —Laura Maioglio, Barbetta Restaurant

Laura Maioglio

LDEI Founding Member Owns Oldest Italian Restaurant in New York

“My father didn’t think the restaurant business was intellectually challenging enough for me. I received a degree magna cum laude in Art History from Bryn Mawr,” explained Laura Maioglio, owner of the family’s 112-year-old restaurant. But when the only child found out Sebastiano Maioglio, her father, had sold Barbetta Restaurant, she pleaded with the new owner to cancel the sale, and she took over running it in 1962.

Using her art history knowledge, Laura closed the restaurant and began decorating it with 18th century Piemontese antiques. Most notable among these is the great Piemontese chandelier that hangs in the main dining room. It took her two years to negotiate its purchase from a palazzo in Torino, Piemonte’s capital, which formerly belonged to the Savoys, Italy’s royal family.

Obviously diners couldn’t sit in valuable antique chairs, but Laura had artisans in Italy reproduce 180 copies of one. Another important piece is the 1631 harpsichord in the foyer, signed by Francesco Fabbri, an extremely rare instrument that the Metropolitan Museum is eyeing.

In its interior design, Barbetta was the first elegant Italian restaurant created in New York. This represented a radical departure from the then-erroneous American notion that Italian restaurants are invariably “rustic” and that Italian food must be similarly “rustic.”

Barbetta is the oldest Italian restaurant in New York and the oldest still owned by the family who founded it. It’s also the oldest restaurant in New York’s Theatre District. It was the first to present Italian dishes that were elegant yet, at the same time, absolutely authentic and well known to Italians in Italy although unfamiliar in the 1960s to Americans.

The reason Barbetta serves Piemontese dishes is because that’s where the family originated and emigrated from in 1902, and where they still maintain their 17th century family palazzo in Fubine Monferrato. Piemonte is Italy’s northwestern-most region, bordering on Switzerland and France.

“I was determined to make Barbetta more Piemontese than ever, so I added Fonduta, Carne Cruda, Bagna Cauda, and Bue al Barolo, and I introduced white truffles. We serve the great white truffle dishes of Piemonte during the truffle season from October to Christmas,” said Laura. In 1962, she started bringing in white truffles—hunted by her own truffle hounds—because at that time white truffles were not available in the U.S.

As one would expect from a restaurant that is over 100 years old, the cuisine and menu at Barbetta reflect its 112-year culinary history. Beside each dish on the menu is noted the year in which it was first served. The sous chefs are encouraged to create new dishes to present to her for possible inclusion on the menu. To her “Team de Cuisine,” she acts as coach and follows the lines of a sports team. She employs a staff of 50.

Brownstones and Gardens

Back in 1925, Laura’s father bought four adjoining brownstones from the Astor family and used two to make the restaurant. She expanded it to three, and in 1963, added and designed a garden for open air dining, a rare thing at that time in Manhattan. Today it’s shaded by century-old trees, and it flowers with the scented blooms of magnolia, wisteria, jasmine, oleander, and gardenia.

In recent years, Laura restored the second floor of the 1874 and 1881 brownstones for use as party rooms for up to 100 people. Many films and television shows have been filmed in Barbetta Restaurant including Arthur, Alice, The Departed, Mad Men, and Sex and the City.

In her personal life, Laura is married to a brilliant doctor, Günter Blobel, who single-handedly won a 1999 Nobel prize in Medicine “for the discovery that proteins have intrinsic signals that govern their transport and localization in the cell.” Dr. Blobel gave the entire proceeds of the almost one million dollars of his Nobel Prize to the reconstruction of the Frauenkirche, Synagogue, and reconstruction of Dresden, razed to the ground in the bombing of 1945.

Carol Brock said, “Günter attended all LDENY events and was a keynote speaker for the chapter’s all-day symposium. Laura was a founding member of LDEI and has been a great supporter for many decades.”

How to stay in business for more than a century? “Loyal customers,” said Laura. “They say how beautiful the restaurant is, and they always want to say ‘hello’ to me.” —By CiCi Williamson
A childhood home, a unique restaurant, a destination for dignitaries, and a listing on the National Register of Historic Places by the Department of Interior: this is Holly Arnold Kinney’s The Fort. Crowned with the Wine Spectator Award of Excellence in America every since 2006, The Fort was named in 2017 in Open Table’s Top 100 Restaurants in America. It began with Holly’s mother, Elizabeth “Bay” Arnold, wanting to build an adobe-style home outside Denver, so Holly and her brother, Keith, could grow up in the country with clean air, horseback riding, and fishing. “My father, Sam’l P. Arnold, and mother were amateur historians. Bay was reading a book about Bent’s Fort, a famous Colorado fur-trade adobe fort built in 1833 and saw a drawing in the book of this adobe castle on the plains. She turned to Sam’l and said, ‘Let’s build an adobe castle like this!’ At this time they discovered this beautiful red rock property for sale in Morrison, Colorado, just southwest of Denver. They bought it in 1961,” said Holly. “Our architect was the famous William Lumpkins, an award-winning architect in adobe construction from Santa Fe. With a contractor and the help of 22 men, we puddled over 80,000 mud and straw bricks, weighing 40 pounds each, to construct the main building. With construction costs rising, the bank suggested we put a business in our historic home. Sam’l told Bay and said, ‘You can cook!’ and then she said to Sam’l, ‘Well, you can cook!’ The lower level became the restaurant and the upper level, our living quarters. All the furniture, gates, doors, and chairs were hand carved by Taos artists in the same style as they were in 1833. The Fort restaurant opened for business in February 1963.” “What to serve in our Fort? Bay and Sam’l (a Lifetime Achievement awardee by IACP) started researching the diaries of what the pioneers ate along the Santa Fe Trail, what the mountain men ate, the cuisines of the native Indian tribes, and the culinary influences of the Mexican and Spanish traders. My father’s research for his cookbook, *Eating Up the Santa Fe Trail*, was the inspiration for our menu. As part of giving the public a ‘Living History Experience’ of Bent’s Fort, we decided to serve ‘New Foods of the Old West.’ The magic of The Fort's cuisine, is that we go back researching what recipes were popular in the 19th century and add a contemporary twist. The Fort's staples have always been buffalo, elk, and quail. Today we serve over 70,000 entrees of buffalo annually.” In 1997, President Clinton chose The Fort to host the official dinner for the Summit of Eight leaders of the World. There were over 7,000 Press from around the world, but only a pool of 120 were allowed to cover The Fort dinner. Her father, then over 70 years old had congestive heart failure and wanted to sell The Fort. Not wanting to lose her family home, Holly purchased 49% of interest and ran both her PR firm and a 350 seat restaurant with 90 employees. She purchased the other 51% when her father passed away in 2006. Among many honors, Holly was inducted into the Colorado Hall of Fame for Tourism/Visit Denver in 2017 and was named Outstanding Business Woman of the Year by the Denver Business Journal in 2016. From 2013-2014, she served on the National U.S. Travel and Tourism Advisory Board appointed by then Secretary of Commerce John Bryson and President Obama. “Our beautiful 80-foot-high red sandstone rock next to The Fort gives a unique beauty and feel as if you are walking back in time to the 1800s,” Holly believes. “You enter the gates and see the campfire burning aspen or piñon wood in the open air courtyard. The Cheyenne teepee is also present with a welcome sign in six languages, including Cheyenne!” “It is my hope that beyond my lifetime, The Fort restaurant will continue serving our historic cuisine as part of the Tesoro Cultural Center run by the Board of Directors,” said Holly, who is the founder and current Executive Director of the Tesoro Foundation. “This is our family legacy and will make The Fort experience fun for future generations. The Fort is actually much more than a restaurant, as it is a cultural destination.” —By CiCi Williamson

Above: The Game Plate features a bone-in elk chop, buffalo sirloin medallion, and a grilled teriyaki quail. Sam’l Arnold overseeing construction of The Fort. Holly with Sissy Bear. “In 1962, we adopted a Canadian black bear cub named ‘Sissy’ who lived at The Fort for 19 years. She was my pet bear, and died of old age. There are many stories and photos of Sissy bear at the Fort. In 2016, I wrote a children’s book titled *Sissy Bear at The Fort*. My advice to anyone opening a restaurant today: get enough capital to buy the building and be your own landlord. So many great restaurants have closed as the landlord raises the rent, and the restaurant cannot afford it.” —Holly Arnold Kinney, The Fort
Family Creates a Small Piece of Lebanese Life

From the first Lebanese Taverna location in Arlington down the street from their house, Gladys Abi-Najm’s company now operates 10 eateries and employs around 350 people whose heritage is from over 30 countries. In Zagat’s top 40 D.C. restaurants for the past 20 years, the eatery began with her father’s dream of creating a small piece of life in Lebanon in their new home, America.

Her father and mother, Tanios and Marie Abi-Najm, immigrated with their five children in 1979, and three years later purchased Athenian Taverna, a sub and pizza shop in Arlington. Tanios wrote, “We could only afford to change half of the original sign, thus ‘Lebanese’ Taverna was born.” Gladys said, “The chefs were both my parents who were just cooking the food we ate at home. All of us have worked in the restaurant since the very first day. We were always a part of it—even in middle and high school. There was never a time that we didn’t contribute in some way so it was as much ‘ours’ as it was our parents. As we grew, we each were able to find our passion and apply it to the business but we all worked in the dining room or kitchen. My talent has always been art and graphics, so I became the creative director and the de facto face of Lebanese Taverna. I also printed the menus, designed the ads, and helped with the décor.”

She attributes the restaurants’ 39-year longevity to “our customers, first and foremost. So many witnessed us growing up in the restaurants, and they supported us with carpool rides, helping with homework, and bringing their friends to the restaurant frequently. This community accomplished such a sense of achievement with our success that it created a culture that went from store to store and cheered on our success.”

“We are the epitome of the American Dream, and people were rooting for us. The other is family. Our parents taught us that hard work, honesty, and taking care of each other were the most important things in life. The food and hospitality were equally important. All we were doing was serving traditional, honest, and fresh Lebanese cuisine—not reinventing the wheel. We took care of each other and our customers,” said Gladys.

For the first 35 years, we didn’t have lots of money to spend on advertising, but what we did is give. Give to anyone who asked. Give to our customer’s causes, schools and endeavors and it would come back tenfold. It was amazing to see how it worked. And at the same time, we would get people to try our food, so it was outreach for us. This has been a successful format for us, and we continue to give to close to 1,000 organizations each year in the form of gift certificates or food.

“Keeping good staff is probably one of the most challenging things in any business, especially today with the sheer number of restaurants opening daily. Many of our employees are here without their families. They see my siblings, cousins, aunts, and uncles working together and they feel a sense of home,” reveals Gladys.

Upkeep is another challenge. “Imagine if a couple hundred people lived in your home and that’s what’s like!” says Gladys. “It takes far greater effort to be in business for many decades. Restaurants run on little profit margin, so we need to spend our renovation money wisely.”

“It’s been an honor to be a Dame, especially with networking and feeling empowered by such successful women. We have also gotten press from Dames writing articles for publications, such as Bonnie Benwick, Deputy Food Editor, The Washington Post, and Carole Sugarman in Bethesda Magazine. I love how we help each other out,” concludes Gladys.—By CiCi Williamson

Clockwise: Tabouleh; Washington, D.C. interior and exterior; hommos; the first Lebanese Taverna, Arlington; Abi-Najm family.

Keep it small and manageable. Even if your family isn’t working with you, make sure you have their support and that of your loved ones. There will be times when you will need it!—Gladys Abi-Najm, Lebanese Taverna
Les Dames d’Escoffier International

As co-owner of Highlands Bar & Grill, Pardis Stitt focuses on front-of-house operations. “Her influence and charm are evident from the moment you walk into the restaurant. Her attention to detail and warm welcome make Highlands so inviting. Without her, the Highlands is not the Highlands,” award-winning chef Frank Stitt, Pardis’ husband, told The New York Times in 2013.

She attributes the 36-year longevity of their restaurant to “quality, graciousness, consistency. Being in the restaurants and working alongside the staff. Mutual respect for the staff, guests, purveyors, and our broader community.” Indeed, it’s the Birmingham-raised woman of Persian heritage who has instituted a sense of hospitality. Food and gracious hospitality are important aspects in both Southern and Persian cultures.

Pardis became interested in the restaurant business when “A close friend of mine who managed a restaurant in Birmingham was short staffed one weekend and asked me to help her on the door. I was immediately smitten with the whirl and rush of activity and asked if I could come back the following week.”

Now balancing a staff of 170 in the couple’s three restaurants, Pardis said that if they are short staffed, “we take tables out and reconfigure the ‘floor’—would rather have fewer covers and take care of our guests instead of spreading the staff too thin.”

It’s definitely location times three. “My husband is the executive chef of our three restaurants (Highlands Bar and Grill, Bottega, and Chez Fonfon). The restaurants are within a three block radius, in an area named Five Points, close to downtown. There is a quirky vibe to the neighborhood, with a mix of residential and commercial, and several stately buildings from the 1920’s.”

“It seems we are always in the midst of renovations—trying to make our spaces more attractive, comfortable, and exciting. There is a continual quest to create the magic of what makes a truly great restaurant. All three restaurants are housed in buildings built in the 1920’s, and they were not intended for hundreds of people to come through on a weekly basis, so the renovation and maintenance line on our financial statements is always high!”

“It’s a balancing act to keep up with food trends. Many favorites have become signature dishes, leaving less room for newer items. If we decide to pull one of the favorites off of the menu to add more new dishes, it upsets our guests. Then we go back and add that item again. I would love to know how others approach this situation,” she mused.

“We typically change menus early, middle, and the latter part of each season. We are fortunate to have several farmers within a 60-mile radius who keep us informed of what will be harvested within the month, and this helps define our menus. We also have our own farm where we grow a variety of greens and other vegetables. I love working at our farm. Gardening brings me tremendous joy!”

Joy is also the many honors accorded Highlands, which has been nominated for Outstanding Restaurant by the James Beard Foundation for the last nine years. And Frank Stitt, among numerous honors such as the Craig Claiborne Lifetime Achievement Award from the Southern Foodways Alliance, was named to the James Beard Foundation’s “Who’s Who of Food and Beverage in America.”

“But ultimately, it goes back to providing an incredible experience so our guests want to come back again and again,” believes Pardis. “The biggest advertisement is by word of mouth.”

And that goes for Dames in the Birmingham Chapter. Pardis says, “Les Dames provides a network with individuals in our community who share similar interests, concerns, and challenges. I love the opportunity to gather and celebrate with my fellow Dames.”—By CiCi Williamson

THINKING OF OPENING YOUR OWN RESTAURANT?

Provide a place the community needs or wants. Start small and take the time to grow. Pay bills on time. Treat staff, guests, and purveyors with respect.—Pardis Stitt, Highlands Bar and Grill
Enrolling in culinary school at age 17, Mary Sue Milliken probably didn’t envision that today she and her business partner of 35 years, Chef Susan Feniger, would own five eateries plus food trucks and employ 400. The pair was inspired to begin their first Border Grill, after a 1985 road trip far south of the Mexican border in a VW bug.

“I’ve never regretted being in the restaurant business,” said Mary Sue. “This is probably because of the strong community of women I’ve met who are passionate and inspiring. The feeling that we’re in this together is unbeatable. I’ve always been entrepreneurial, even from a young age. Being in a male dominated field, owning my own restaurant seemed to be the smartest path forward.”

“Susan and I made the best decisions we could, given our experience levels, and in most cases we got lucky! We followed our gut and examined many options before making a decision. We are very persistent and never give up. Border Grill Santa Monica was in business for 27 years, our Downtown LA location has been here for 20 years, and our Mandalay Bay location just turned 19. We also treat the business like every day is a new day, every customer is a new customer; we’re constantly trying to evolve our concept and improve it. We promote our restaurants through community involvement, grass roots marketing, word of mouth, and connecting with potential customers.”

Regarding food trends, Mary Sue said, “We change the menu all the time and get inspired by seasonal offerings at local farmers markets. We are constantly trying to stay current even if it’s in our restaurants in sunny California or the hot Nevada desert. But in order for a new trendy item to earn a place on the menu, we all have to agree that it’s more delicious than what it’s replacing. If it does taste better, then it just becomes a marketing exercise and getting the staff excited to sell the product.”

To overcome staffing and maintenance challenges, Mary Sue believes “Promoting a sense of teamwork and accountability and making your staff happy creates loyalty, and they all fill in for each other. Restaurants are about 10 times more expensive to maintain than a house! You also have to find ways to work with your landlord and all of their stipulations.”

In addition to being a restaurateur, Mary Sue has co-authored five cookbooks, co-starred in nearly 400 episodes of the Food Network’s “Too Hot Tamales,” and co-hosted a food-centered radio show for over a decade in Los Angeles. She competed on season three of Bravo’s “Top Chef Masters,” making it to the finale and winning $40,000 for her charity, Share Our Strength, where she has been a fundraiser, board member and advocate since 1987.

Back to the future, Mary Sue became the first female chef at Chicago’s Le Perroquet in 1978, and went on to refine her skills in Paris at Restaurant d’Olympe, a woman-owned, Michelin two-star restaurant. In 1993, she helped found Women Chefs & Restaurateurs and Chefs Collaborative. In addition to WCR and James Beard Awards, Susan and Mary Sue were named CalTravel Restaurateur of the Year 2011 “for their tremendous impact in nationally promoting a colorful, fun side of California’s restaurant industry.”

Mary Sue was selected to serve the U. S. State Department as a member of the American Chef Corps, working in Pakistan, Malta, and Italy to promote diplomacy through food.

She concluded, “I’m excited about #TimesUp, a movement against sexual harassment. I think it’s going to have a really positive effect on the restaurant industry.” —By CiCi Williamson

Susan Feniger (left) and Mary Sue Milliken taught Julia Child how to make naan in the tandoori oven at their first restaurant, CITY.

Go work in a restaurant first and make sure that you have the temperament for the hours and intensity. It’s also important to understand the restaurant business model. Knowing how to cook and give good service is only half of the battle. You also have to be able to generate enough money to pay the bills and, hopefully, have a little left over.—Mary Sue Milliken, Border Grill Restaurants
Following non-cooking careers in New York and California, Liz Baron and her husband Jim developed their mega-successful Blue Mesa Grills in the Dallas area. Liz, a graphic artist with a Masters in TV and Radio Production, and Jim, a Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology, have seven restaurants and approximately 600 employees including 36 general managers, assistant managers, and catering managers. And their 30-year old son, Zak, (the same age as the company) runs one of their Dallas restaurants.

Among numerous accolades, Blue Mesa Grill has been listed as one of the 12 most popular restaurants in the Dallas-Fort Worth area by the Zagat guide and “Third Best Brunch in the World” (in the value segment) from International Restaurant and Hotel Awards. It’s been named “Best Happy Hour,” “Best Margarita,” and “Best Tortilla Soup” in D Magazine (beating out The Mansion’s), and has been recognized by The Dallas Business Journal as the largest restaurant caterer in North Texas.

According to Liz, “My husband’s and my route to the restaurant business was, at best, circuitous.” Tired of sitting in a room with patients, Jim got hired by PepsiCo to work in California at Taco Bell. He developed performance management systems for their 15,000 managers. Liz worked as a film production assistant. After 10 years at Taco Bell and then El Torito, Jim realized that he did not like corporate life, and Liz—a woman in a male dominated film industry (“Sweetie, get me a cup of coffee”)—decided to be a teacher and do her artwork on the side, which was her true passion.

“Jim would come home frustrated from work,” Liz explained, “and together we would fantasize about starting our own restaurant. He would throw out concepts, and I would help by drawing story boards and elevations showing the exterior and interior of the restaurant or the signage and menu design.”

Assigned to turn around some El Torito restaurants in Texas (Cal-Mex did not compute in the land of Tex-Mex), Jim and Liz first developed and opened Caliente, a Mexican cantina. It was a success but not the brand they wanted to run with. Blue Mesa Grill emerged as the concept that they could put their name on. “The Santa Fe lifestyle was the best way to frame what we wanted to offer (lighter, fresher, and more contemporary) using the ingredients of Mexico and the Southwest—and one that was reasonably priced.” Borrowing $250,000 and the name (which they later trademarked) from a margarita that El Torito was testing, the Barons converted El Torito’s Tequila Wilie’s to Blue Mesa Grill in Addison in 1988. “Within a couple of months, we doubled weekly sales,” said Liz. “Today, the average annual sales at a Blue Mesa is $3.25 million.”

“One major contribution I specifically brought to the table is making our dining experience very affordable. We had two young children and were on a limited budget. We built sales based on the frequency of visits, not a high check average.”

Liz and Jim’s company now has five Blue Mesa Grills, a franchise with two Blue Mesa Taco & Tequila Bars in airports, and two TNT/Tacos and Tequila restaurants (Dallas and Austin). Their opt-in rewards group, the “Chileheads,” is now 175,000 strong. They started Good Karma Guacamole where they donate 50 cents to a local charity each time a tableside guacamole is ordered. They have donated almost $240,000 since its inception.

Dallas Dames have been involved in Blue Mesa. Sharon Hage has worked numerous times as the Barons’ consulting chef; Paula Lambert’s goat cheese and Bonnie Itzig’s proprietary tea and coffee have been on the menu for 20 years, and Dedie Leahy was the original PR person. Liz states, “The Dames have always been a sounding board and resource for me and the source of several decades-long friendships.”—By GiGi Williamson
Opening two Chicago restaurants in two years is difficult enough. But making them so good they each won the James Beard Award for best restaurant in America? Darned near impossible, but tell that to Deann Bayless and her chef/husband Rick who opened Frontera Grill (1987) and Topolobampo (1989). The former won the award in 2007, and the latter, in 2017. The restaurants were a result of travel research for a cookbook.

"Rick and I embarked on a journey of crisscrossing the entire Mexican republic to research Authentic Mexican: Regional Cooking from the Heart of Mexico (1987). The publication of that book coincided with the opening of Frontera Grill," explained Deann. "But even before that, I loved food, and I loved to entertain. Rick came from a restaurant family and I just knew this is something we could do. The location sort of fell into place. We took a very big chance locating Frontera Grill in Chicago’s River North neighborhood way back in 1987. But it worked, and years later we have three places, all side-by-side."

The couple changes menus at their restaurants roughly every four weeks to take advantage of seasonal produce. ("Yes, even in the Chicago winter," she said.) With an eye to food trends, Deann said, "One question we always ask ourselves is ‘What would this menu look like if we opened today’ and not, say, 30 years ago? It’s an enlightening, fruitful exercise.”

Whereas most restaurants have staffing challenges, Deann attributes staffing as one of the main factors in the long life of their restaurants. “What I think has always set us apart is a commitment to education. Virtually every day in our restaurants there is a class of some kind taking place, and I think that translates to creating community within the restaurants. I think that means we’re a little insulated from the trappings of shift work at other restaurants,” she believes.

“You have always had that sense of wanting to nurture people, wanting to look for the best in people, and wanting to bring it out. There’s magic in that. Beyond that, we simply care a great deal about the experience of our guests. We have different concepts for each place, but it’s not a moving target: we want our food to stand out and we want to deliver an unforgettable experience,” said Deann.

Cookbooks and Rick’s PBS-TV show, “Mexico One Plate at a Time” (for 11 years), help encourage customers. “It’s our hope that when readers and viewers see the care we put into highlighting the amazing culture and cuisine of Mexico, they’ll be inclined to join us at one of our restaurants. And once we have them there, it’s up to our teams to wow them,” she said.

Deann is a longtime member of the Chicago Chapter. She concludes, “This is a very interesting and exhilarating time for women in this profession. Having a network of support is perhaps more valuable now than ever.”—By GiGi Williamson
Score: Renovation, one; Fire, zero. About nine years after Stephanie Jaeger and her husband, Scott, opened their Pear Tree Restaurant, the buildings on either side were completely destroyed by a four-alarm fire. “We had done a renovation in October of 2005 and updated the walls and roof. It saved the building.” The couple also escorted an unaware 85-year-old grandmother and her 9-year old granddaughter out to the street from an endangered apartment behind the building.

Another time, a 3:00 a.m. call from the security company was the result of a Christmas tree that had fallen over, shattering the beautiful glass pear ornaments. Fires and alarms are only a couple of challenges to running a successful restaurant, which the Jaegers have done for 21 years.

Canadian born Stephanie’s first restaurant job was as a busser at Beachside Café, which was owned and run by Janet Mcquire, a founder of the BC Chapter. Her foray into the restaurant industry began at the Beachside Café in West Vancouver, gaining experience in the Dundarave area before jetting off to Europe for three months. Upon returning, she met and married Scott, and they opened Pear Tree Restaurant in 1997, located about eight miles from downtown Vancouver. “We were very young and more then naive,” she admitted, “but the location we found had had two previous, successful owners. I knew my husband could cook; he’d already been around the world and worked with greats. It was just figuring out if our customers would understand the ‘European’ style we wanted to portray, with Canadian ingredients, in a suburban area. We wanted to bring quality, not quantity—the best we could to the table.”

Stephanie is the front-of-house manager. They employ five in the kitchen and two on the floor. She attributes the long life of their restaurant to “Persistence, determination, and probably a lot of stubbornness. We have certainly had down times, of course, when the economy was bad, but you couldn’t quit then. We’ve worked too hard to get this far.”

“We actually do very little promotion. It’s a lot by word of mouth and longevity. We do make a point of meeting as many new restaurateurs so the industry knows us well. We have produced some great servers and cooks who still promote us even though they aren’t with us anymore.”

The Pear Tree has a seasonal, three-course table d’hote that changes about every four weeks. “Other than that,” said Stephanie, “we tweak during the year but try and use the same products. Our farmers know we will use their product throughout the year, and the product must remain high quality.”

“We are fortunate to have young kitchen staff who love to bring in new ideas, and Scott can say ‘no’ only so many times, ergo new items are tested often. But we do have some ‘classics’ that we are told ‘can never come off the menu.’”

Pear Tree Restaurant won fourth place in Vancouver Magazine’s “restaurant of the year” for both 2016 and 2017, and has been listed in Burnaby’s Best fine dining five years running from Burnaby Now. Stephanie is a board member of Burnaby’s Empty Bowls, an organization dedicated to alleviating hunger in Burnaby, and she is an active member of the BC Chapter. “Les Dames has introduced me to some wonderful women that I can not only call friends but also get to promote their products through my restaurant. It has helped develop my courage; it’s amazing to talk to mentors and realize they too go through similar highs and lows, struggles and successes,” reveals Stephanie.

And the “handwriting on the wall?” It was fingerprints left by firemen checking the temperature during the four-alarm fire.—By CiCi Williamson

THINKING OF OPENING YOUR OWN RESTAURANT?

Have patience, determination, and open mindedness. It’s an industry that is always changing, for the better or worse. You need to be willing to ride the wave, learn, and strive forward. Most of all don’t forget about your friends and family; you will need them.—Stephanie Jaeger, Pear Tree Restaurant
You have to be patient and learn to expect the unexpected. Don’t let things faze you as there always is a way to overcome things. Keep a tight ship; watch the bottom line. Stick to what you are good at but never stop learning and watching the market. And be good to your staff, customers and suppliers. They will be your champions whatever happens. —Pervis Todiwala, Café Spice Namaste, London
Support Green Tables: The Agricultural & Civic Initiative of LDEI

By Arnell Hinkle, RD, MPH (San Francisco)  
Co-Chair, Green Tables

Since its inception in 2006, Green Tables (GT) has become integral to the work of LDEI. GT projects engage LDEI members in myriad ways (see GT Chapter Projects at www.ldei.org for examples). The primary goals of GT are:

• Promote community health and well-being
• Foster LDEI’s leadership in the sustainable food movement
• Build upon existing community food, gardening and agriculture efforts
• Inspire focus on the value of local farmers and enhance the use of locally grown food
• Share our skills and knowledge to further the local food movement and enhance public health

In 2018 and beyond, LDEI seeks to inspire members to adopt more GT values and practices within their own food businesses and professional activities. Such member-driven efforts, along with GT projects within our chapters, will demonstrate the leadership of LDEI members to promote the growth of a more healthful, equitable and sustainable food system in their own communities and beyond.

As LDEI chapters and as individual professionals, we can support the goals of GT by:

• Pursuing and supporting products, business models, programs, initiatives, and educational efforts which positively affect the public health of our communities
• Educating ourselves and others about the intersection of food and health
• Buying, developing, or pioneering new products
• Changing values and practices in our businesses to arch towards healthy foods
• Participating in broad initiatives that move our society towards healthier practices
• Taking actions and making decisions that support access to good food and fare wages for all who participate in the food system
• Working to improve the distribution of healthful fresh food across our communities
• Eliminating wage disparities in our food-focused businesses
• Ensuring that all public school children—regardless of their ZIP Code—are offered healthful fresh food at school
• Supporting practices that replace, as much as consume, our natural resources and the food we farm, fish, buy, and eat
• Creating a more efficient system where less of our food is wasted and travels fewer miles
• Educating ourselves and our community to ensure our food creation and preparation choices will leave our planet in a better state than we find it today.

How to Get Involved

Unlike our planet’s resources, the ways that LDEI chapters can get involved in Green Tables are endless. If you have ideas for a GT project, please contact your local or international GT liaison. To learn more about GT, check out the LDEI website, and consider participating in the GT workshop at our annual conference in Seattle. If your chapter is involved in a GT project, please let my co-chair, Amy Myrdal Miller (San Francisco), and me know so that we can share your experiences in a future issue of the LDEI Quarterly magazine.
“Bright Ideas” in the Planning for Seattle Conference

By Cynthia Nims, Seattle Conference Co-chair

The Seattle conference team is picking up serious steam, with planning well underway for our gathering here in October. If only the conference were a full week long, we just might have a chance to cover every interesting, delicious, inspiring, creative, innovative thing going on with food and beverage in the city. But know that we’re doing our best to pack the conference days with programming and events that will make the most of your time here. There will be plenty of opportunities for professional development and education, complemented by distinctive Northwest cuisine.

Our hope is to provide you with a select list of local restaurants and other culinary destinations (bakeries, chocolatiers, coffee and tea shops, bars, etc.) in the city—as well as some hints about neighborhoods to visit, maybe a brief excursion or two outside the city—in the next month or so, to help you with some advance planning for your time in Seattle. In addition to an array of interesting pre-conference tours on Thursday, we do plan to offer a couple of post-conference overnight tours as well. One will be to explore the outstanding wine and agricultural offerings of our Dames in Eastern Washington, and the other hosted by the wonderful Dames up in the Vancouver, BC chapter. We hope that many of you will be able to extend your stay to take in either planned extra activities or explorations on your own. Or why not both?! As I write this, it’s too early for confirmation of most programming; we’re in the thick of outreach and discussions right now. But we can say that among topics we hope to touch on are local heritage grains, Northwest oysters and other seafood, local beverages of all sorts, farming, international influences in the region, history of our food and wine traditions, technology, and more. And of course, you should have every opportunity to remain well caffeinated throughout, should you wish!

The formal theme for the conference is “Gray Skies, Bright Ideas,” with the intent of highlighting new, innovative, creative developments in the culinary realm today. But our team is also embracing a thread of storytelling that we hope to weave through conference as well. The art of storytelling is making a resurgence in the face of our modern, hyper-digital communication habits today. The power of telling a good story can, by contrast, have a more profound impact, both in professional interactions and our personal lives. We will see where that thread leads us.

This year, the local off-site event that is usually held on Friday night will be instead on Saturday night (swapping with the Grande Dame Award Dinner, which will be Friday). It will be a dazzling, colorful evening complete with trapeze artistry and jazz music. This will be a particularly apt send-off, a fun and dynamic way to wrap up the 2018 conference. You might think about packing something with a bit of color!
By Bev Shaffer, Cleveland/Northeast Ohio Chapter; 2nd Vice President, LDEI Board

Our first face-to-face meeting of 2018, on January 26-28, felt as if it were straight out of “Empire State of Mind” by Alicia Keys:

There’s nothing you can do
Now you’re in New York
These streets will make you feel brand new
Big lights will inspire you…

While musicians were practicing for the Grammy Awards and celebrities were walking the red carpet, your LDEI Board Members gathered enthusiastically to continue to work for our membership.

During the Friday afternoon session at Hilton Midtown, the Board began the weekend with an icebreaker provided by President Hayley Matson-Mathes. We asked ourselves: What is the most stressful thing about your job? A life goal you are working on? What do you do to revive yourself? What’s one thing you love about your job? It was easy to relax and laugh when one Board member said, “I’ve been a life long procrastinator…and I plan to be better in the future!”

The remainder of Friday and all day Saturday, we got down to business. First Vice President Ann Stratte discussed the Patron program and Partnerships. As Second Vice President, I reported on the Quarterly, both the Conference and Spring issues and my work with editors Susan Slack and CiGi Williamson, and I updated everyone on the Affinity Program. I am working toward garnering Affinity discounts and deals for our members in Canada, England, and Mexico, who often are not able to take advantage of current offers.

Third Vice President Kathy Gold is working on social media promotional tasks and sending releases for items such as the M.F.K. Fisher Awards.

Treasurer Sharon Olson reviewed the December 2017 statements and assured the Board, “We are in a strong financial position with the resources we need to further our mission of education and philanthropy.”

Secretary Deborah Mintcheff presented the Board with a completed Chapter Formation Questionnaire for Paris, and we approved proceeding through the multi-step process toward a potential LDEI Paris Chapter.

Chapter Board Liaisons (CBLs) Julie Chernoff, Beth Vlasich Pav, and Drew Faulkner are asking the same questions on each conference call with their chapter presidents, and then they share informational reports to all chapters. This has been well received.

Greg Jewell reported on the conference survey, and the Board reviewed the results. Hayley assured us that these results were shared with the upcoming Seattle conference chairs. The Seattle Conference promises to be informative, delicious, and fun!

Past President Stacy Zeigler gave us an update on The Brock Circle, including the upcoming formation of a Brock Circle Advisory Board. Past President Maria Gomez stopped in and reported on hotel site visits for our potential New York 2020 conference.

We then moved on to strategic visioning for 2018 and spent a very productive day working on new initiatives (with multiple assignments for each Board member). It was agreed that the Board should always be aware of deliverables, that we need to continue to connect with members and deliver value back to our Dames.

As a Board, we will be reaching out more with chapter engagement by visiting chapters whenever possible and connecting with the general membership. Other initiatives included working on helping chapters with promotional materials, thanking members for attending conference (especially but not limited to first time attendees), creating a shared resource of “category experts” by asking each chapter what they do best, and continuing to drive the message that this is a business and a professional organization, not a club. We will strive to create an environment where the media looks to us first for trending forecasts. We will fine tune, tweaking where necessary, anything that does not appropriately fill a “value proposition” for our members.

All of us left each day’s meetings exhausted, but full of a sense of eagerness to bring great value to our membership and continue to serve them well.

After Friday’s meeting, we gathered at Grande Dame Lidia Bastianich’s restaurant, Felidia, for a very special meal featuring antipasto, primo, secondi and dolci. Even though her night was extremely busy, Lidia graciously stopped in to welcome us all. The entire meal was assolutamente delizioso!

Saturday evening we were hosted by members of the New York Chapter at a cocktail...
NEW TO THE LDEI BOARD FOR 2018

Drew Spangler Faulkner
CHAPTER BOARD LIAISON

A respected chef, culinary educator, and journalist, Drew began her career with Madeleine Kamman learning classic French and Italian techniques. She went on to work in a number of well-known, innovative restaurants in the Boston and San Francisco areas, emerging as an executive chef at restaurants in both the U.S. and Canada. Today her energy is focused on writing and teaching. She has taught extensively at both professional and recreational schools including the Culinary Institute of America and L’Academie de Cuisine. She currently teaches through the Montgomery County Department of Recreation. Drew’s culinary writing has been published in both regional and international publications; her most recent writing appears in Farming Magazine. She blogs at CookingWithDrew.com. Drew is past president of the Washington, D.C., Chapter.

Sharon Olson
TREASURER

Sharon has been immersed in food industry marketing for over 30 years. She was a vice president at two leading foodservice agencies prior to forming Olson Communications in 1988. She also formed the Culinary Visions Panel in 2002 that surveys opinion leaders and consumers on emerging trends in the food industry and is co-founder of Y-Pulse LLC (www.ypulse.org), a youth trend-tracking organization. Sharon often writes and speaks on trends in the food industry, most recently presenting original research at the NRA Show, CIA, the National Association of College and University Food Services national conference, and The Flavor Experience. Sharon holds an MBA with distinction from DeVry University’s Keller Graduate School of Management and served on the advisory board for the Hotel and Restaurant Program at Ashland University. She is past president of the Chicago Chapter.

Beth Vlasich Pav
CHAPTER BOARD LIAISON

After beginning her career as a TV and video writer/producer, a two-month European journey changed the course of Beth Pav’s life. She returned with a passion for creating the endless possibilities that begin with fresh, wholesome ingredients. She graduated from L’Academie de Cuisine and took additional classes at the Culinary Institute of America. Then she opened Cooking by Design Culinary Studio in Austin, Texas, as a home base for private cooking classes, food styling, and her personal chef service. In addition to being a celebrated chef, Beth is a renowned culinary instructor, recipe- and menu-developer, and a writer. Enthusiasts enjoy her popular online journal, “Fresh from Beth,” and print articles on her gastronomic, lifestyle, and adventure-travel stories. Beth is a member of the Austin Chapter and is a 16-year member of IACP.


Note: Extensive bios of officers who served on the 2017 board and continue on the 2018 board are on pages 11-13 of the Spring 2017 Quarterly.
Established in 2009, the Legacy Awards provide targeted mentorship opportunities for women who are not members of LDEI. Eligible women must have at least four years of experience working in the food, beverage and hospitality industries. Each Legacy Award winner is sponsored by an accomplished Dame for a one-week workplace experience at her business in the U.S., U.K., Canada, or Mexico. The Julia Child Foundation for Gastronomy and the Culinary Arts generously supports the Awards. “Year after year, the Foundation finds it very gratifying to see how much all the participants get out of this worthwhile program,” said Todd Schulkin, Executive Director, of the Foundation. “LDEI’s Legacy Awards continue to set the standard for how food industry mentors can not only yield great outcomes but inspire all of us to give back and set lofty new goals. The Foundation is proud to support this innovative and effective program.”

Applications are accepted from March through late April.

I can still feel the nervous anticipation I felt as I walked up to the winery on my first day. I knew that the next four days were going to be unforgettable, but I couldn’t have guessed at how impactful the experience would be. Having the chance to meet with women in every department of the winery was truly special. I got to have an insider’s look into an industry that I’ve only just begun to explore, and an understanding of just how multifaceted it can be. Up to this point, my passion for wine has felt like a hobby, relevant to my career, but not a career itself. But after seeing the depth of Chateau Ste. Michelle’s operations, the impressive production facility, the gorgeous (and newly renovated) tasting room, I now see the full potential of my passion and wide range of possibilities it can lead me to.

One particular aspect of the winery that stands out to me is the incredible tasting room and all of the unique educational aspects created to engage guests. The blending room, the sensory sojourn, the food and wine pairing, the Bottega, Enoteca, and more; the tasting room at CSM is so much more than just a tasting room. It is an enticing and enriching experience, one that has inspired me to think creatively about ways that I can share my passion and knowledge with my guests to elevate the shopping experience at Cascadia Liquor.

A favourite memory from the trip was spending a day in Seattle with chapter president Jamie Peha. Jamie took me on a whirlwind tour of the city introducing me to incredible Dames along the way. Again, seeing the full range of opportunities available in the beverage industry was eye-opening and inspiring! All the Dames I met were brimming with kindness, knowledge, and enthusiastic ambition for their craft and their community. I was blown away by the network of support and creativity that these women cultivated and feel privileged to have been a part of it.

I feel extremely fortunate to have been chosen for the Legacy Award Experience at Chateau Ste. Michelle this year. My time at the winery was exciting and inspiring and gave me the opportunity to see how a passion can be turned in to a reality. The gratitude I have—for my host, Kari Leitch, for the Seattle president, Jamie Peha, for all the women I met at CSM, and for the whole Les Dames d’Escoffier International organization—is deep and full. I am excited to take what I learned from all these women, apply it to my career, and offer the same kind of guidance to young women in my own community who are just starting out.
When my close pal Dawn Doucette (British Columbia) sent me the application for the legacy award scholarship, I had no idea what adventures awaited me. I was honoured that my application was accepted and I was granted the 2017 Farm-to-Table award, which was hosted by Barbara Hanley (Boston) of Shy Brothers Farm.

And so the journey began!!! 1st off…. in Westport Point, Massachusetts?? Where’s that?? I was fuelled by the passion to learn cheese making from one of the country’s top artisan producers, I didn’t care if it was on the moon, I wanted to go.

Barbara generously picked me up from the airport (Boston), which was a heck of a distance from Westport Point! I was immediately at ease with a warm hug and her Southern charm—what a doll!! With plenty of time on the drive to Westport to chat, we discovered our geographical distance had not stopped us from being aligned on many views including politics, food sovereignty, waste, homelessness, and “when would be the best time to buy avocados” for the upcoming luncheon Barbara was hosting.

Westport Point is a small historic village scattered with two-story wood-framed homes of Greek revival architecture. Scattered with picturesque farms, roadside farmers markets, and fresh fish and lobster mongers, it is chef heaven!

With Carl Santos as my mentor, I was gently guided through every aspect of the cheese making business for the next three days. Cloumage, Hannahbells, Mozarella, and all the stories, trivia, and minute details of cheese making one could ever want or need to know— a virtual walking Wikipedia of cheese.

Carl didn’t start out as a cheese maker. He and his brothers are dairy farmers, and when the price of milk began to be regulated to below where the Santos brother could continue to earn a living, they needed help. Somehow Barbara, her husband Leo, and the Santos brothers found each other. With Barbara’s background in business and finance, Leo’s love of food, and the Santos brothers desire to keep their farms alive, they hatched a plan that now produces some of the best cheese of its kind in America.

The opportunity to be involved in a true farm-to-table successful business venture under Barbara’s tutelage has restored my faith that sustainable food production can and does exist. I’m extremely honored that I was introduced to every aspect of operations, feeding, and milking cows; learning to make all three cheeses; and even attending the New England cheese guild board meeting. I will feel forever humbled by the passion and craftsmanship the Santos brothers dedicate their lives to. I’m grateful to say I have found a lifetime friend and mentor in Barbara Hanley.

The power of friendship and support that LDEI provides for women in the food community and its Legacy award is empowering, I’m very proud to have been selected, Thank you, LDEI. With love and respect, Shelley Robinson, RSE
I was at the 2017 Southern Foodways Alliance conference in Nashville when I first met Sylvia Ganier (Nashville) of Green Door Gourmet. She was my first introduction to LDEI and the education and mentorship that Dames could provide. I found online the Farm to Sea to Table and Journalism Legacy Award sponsored by the New England Chapter and could not believe such a thing existed. I was amazed from the moment I received the award to the end of the conference. The 40-plus Dames I met in New England excelled in providing me a true mentorship experience.

Nancy Matheson Burns of Dole & Bailey, Inc./Northeast Family Farms took me on a tour of Boston’s foodways from Cultivar restaurant to Faneuil Hall, where Dole & Bailey, the U.S.’s oldest and largest food hub, started. I broke down a lamb from Lisa Webster’s beautiful North Star Sheep Farm with master butcher Kari Underly (Range*, Inc.) and tied together the farm-to-chef relationship through the eyes of both.

Seeing what it takes to support sustainable protein farms with a food hub was essential to me because this is something that is non-existent and much needed in South Carolina. We also visited Topsfield Bakery, Victoria’s Spices, and a beautiful Goat Cheese Farm. I said goodbye to my new friend and lovely host at a potluck with 15 to 20 Dames at a Permaculture farm where the setting, conversation, and food was abundant.

Next up was Amanda Parks’ New England Fishmongers in Elliot, Maine. We spent the day touring her boat and delivering fresh line-caught fish to local restaurants. I ended my day visiting a produce store and having drinks with everyone.

The rest of my week was a whirlwind with my host Christine Rudalevige, writer and The Green Plate cookbook author, who was a wealth of knowledge. We visited Lisa’s farm, several restaurants including Eventide (the oldest brewery in Maine), and local farm-to-table markets. Next I toured Abigail Carroll’s Nonesuch Oyster Farm. An impromptu trip included a clam farm where I learned about the green crab invasion. I was able to watch Christine interview and research articles on sustainability in their food system.

A highlight of the trip was setting up her backyard for the writer’s dinner. I met the most unique and entertaining women ever. I have not laughed so hard in so long. All the food they made, the beer they brewed, the wine they brought, and the conversation were such a gift. The highlight was sitting next to the sweet Pat Brown, former editor of Bon Appetit.

After visiting Common Ground Fair and experiencing Maine’s entire farm-to-table talents and products, saying goodbye to Christine was hard; she had made me feel so comfortable in her home for many days. It meant so much for each Dame to take time to talk with me, show me what she does, and answer my endless questions. The New England Chapter will continue to hold a special place in my heart, and I thank them for the honor.

When I discovered that I had won the LDEI Legacy award, I imagined an opportunity to learn more about tequila and the culture responsible for producing it. In my opinion, storytelling and connections are two significant aspects of our industry. Spirits tell a story, and as bartenders, we get to be the mouthpiece that tells that story and connect our guests to the peoples and traditions of the product. I looked forward to being guided by someone well versed in the subject and enthusiastic about her home, Mexico, and Guadalajara specifically proved to have a generous spirit. I was immersed in a story told through amazing food, drink, music, and the unabashed and authentic hospitality of her people.

No one personifies the country’s attributes more than Araceli Ramos (Mexico). It was evident almost immediately upon meeting Araceli at the airport that I was in the presence of a tour de force. In the whirlwind and fruitful week that followed, I was able to see how this remarkable woman navigates her world. She travels often, so when she is home, she is fielding phone calls, and meetings from early in the morning until early in the evening.

Araceli is part of the reason that Jose Cuervo is the iconic brand that it is, and without her creativity and ambitions, Mondo Cuervo would not exist. Araceli is also a philanthropist and is highly involved in her community. She is also a wife and mother. Araceli manages all of this with grace and genuine kindness and respect for everyone.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE
Kellie Thorn
CONTINUED

one she encounters. For some, this may be exhausting to witness, but I found it exhilarating.

We rode the Jose Cuervo Express® from Guadalajara to Tequila while enjoying cocktails and the beautiful countryside. At Mondo Cuervo, we toured the distillery, and got an overview of the tequila making process. One of the coolest experiences of the Cuervo Mondo visit was being allowed in the cellars of Jose Cuervo, seeing all of the tequila resting in demi-johns, and tasting some of the older stocks, and then being led to a private tequila tasting with one of the guides. After the tasting, we had lunch and then headed to Solar de la Animas, the hotel at Mondo Cuervo, for drinks at the beautiful bar.

In addition to the distillery tour, we attended an awards ceremony for the hospitality industry where Araceli is one of the judges. She also spoke at an American Embassy event celebrating Mexican Independence Week. I loved attending the Guadalajara Symphony because it was Mexican Independence Week, and they played music by Mexican Composers. Afterwards, we attended a dinner and watched dancers perform regional dances. As I sit here and reflect, it was a truly magical day in a week of magical days.

Araceli is a true role model. I am so lucky to have her as a mentor and a friend. I left Mexico with a better understanding of her people and tequila, but I also left inspired by a successful woman with an authentic alegría de vivir. I left full of light. I was forever altered by a successful woman with an authentic alegría de vivir.

The chance to step away from your distractions and take on the role of student for a week is an invaluable lesson. I was able to build upon my knowledge and experiences with an open and undistracted mind.

My host for the week, Susan Ungaro (New York), President of the James Beard Foundation, invited me mid-week to sit in on a directors meeting. It was in this meeting that I learned the extent of the foundation, the programs they initiated, and the causes they stand behind. Susan is the perfect depiction of a perceptive and profound leader of a dynamic and influential organization.

I feel very lucky to have been chosen as the recipient of this award. I have been warmly welcomed by the members of Les Dames, each eager to share their own success stories alongside their encouragements for mine.

Paige Bloskey
CONTINUED

and not in charge. I was not keeping everyone on task, reminding them of the time, or adjusting the final seasoning, and I was definitely not telling anyone to plate a little faster. I was wiping plate rims, garnishing, and helping to clear for the next course; it was unfamiliar territory and I loved it. The following nights were no different: sharing the kitchen with many talented chefs who were excited to share their food, ideas, and tricks of the trade.

The chance to step away from your distractions and take on the role of student for a week is an invaluable lesson. I was able to build upon my knowledge and experiences with an open and undistracted mind.

My host for the week, Susan Ungaro (New York), President of the James Beard Foundation, invited me mid-week to sit in on a directors meeting. It was in this meeting that I learned the extent of the foundation, the programs they initiated, and the causes they stand behind. Susan is the perfect depiction of a perceptive and profound leader of a dynamic and influential organization.

I feel very lucky to have been chosen as the recipient of this award. I have been warmly welcomed by the members of Les Dames, each eager to share their own success stories alongside their encouragements for mine.

WINE AWARD WINNER

Jenny Dorsey
New York City
Co-Founder and Executive Chef of Wednesdays, and Chef Consultant in Manhattan
New York City
Hosted by Amy Hoopes and Carolyn Went
(San Francisco)
Wente Family Estates

For a long time, wine intimidat-ed me. There were always a lot of French words with mysterious ac-cents over vowels, regions I could never remember and a multitude of scents I never smelled in my glass. Even after I became a chef, I barely investigated wine. I always felt like the imposter, murmuring “blueberry…?” when called upon and stumbling over the color descriptions ruby or brick-red or purple-magenta.

Finally this year, I decided to confront my fears and dive into the world of wine by beginning my Sommelier training with the Court of Master Sommeliers. Much to my surprise, wine is a lot more organized and approach-able than I ever realized. Many industry leaders, Wente included, are actively working on making wine a more open, engaging and inclusive topic—one that doesn’t feel like a lair for only elegant men and women in eveningwear. I officially passed Level 1 of my Sommelier course this March and began studying for Level 2. Industry-wide, Level 2 is known as the major hurdle; it tests not only theory but service and sommelier-to-diner interaction.

When I saw the opportunity to live and breathe wine at Wente Vineyards through the LDEI Legacy Awards, I knew I had to apply immediately. Being immersed in an environment where I can unveil so much of what I’ve learned to what actually happens in one of the nation’s major producers is an opportunity like no other. As much as I had grown to love wine, it had yet to become part of my daily, regular routine. I hoped Wente would set me on a course to change that.

During my time at Wente Vineyards, I was able to see the whole 360° of their process.

• I followed Nicki Wente into the fields to sample wine grapes for Brix count (an indicator of sugar content);
• Listened in on a supply chain meeting led by Karl Wente (a complex system that shifts by the hour depending on how the grapes are ripening in the field);
• Shadowed Winemaker Elizabeth Kester through the processing plant as (literally) tons of Sauvignon Blanc were brought onsite;
• Practiced blind tasting with Sommelier Jorge Tinoco;
• Worked the gardens with Master Gardener Diane Dovholuk; and
• Progressed through food & wine pairings with Executive Chef Mike Ward.

I was also able to try my own hand at blending a red wine from different single varietals and create new pairings with Chardon-nay at the Winemaker Studio.

It was such an eye-opening experience to be part of the Wente business for a busy week during harvest season. Wine is truly unlike any other beverage and the labor of love required to bring it onto our tables regularly is nothing short of a feat. I’ll be continuing my wine education with vigor and applying much of what I learned at Wente to passing Level 2!
BIRMINGHAM Martha Johnston
In December, “Today” show contributor, caterer, and author of What Can I Bring?, Elizabeth Heiskell, joined a group of Birmingham Dames for an intimate lunch while in town for a book signing. Pardis Stitt hosted the event at Bottega where Dames tasted everything from champagne to crab cakes...and totally lost track of time! Our group gifted our new friend with a Tena Payne bowl as a reminder of the event. Dames left the luncheon full of holiday spirit and cheer!
During November, we joined Beba Touloupis at her restaurant, Ted’s, for a comfort-food lunch. Members enjoyed sharing professional and personal news as well as plans for the coming season. The group posed afterwards for a group photo in front of the new Ted’s mural.
Cinnamon and Gunpowder by Eli Brown is an adventure book (with pirates!) that offered our Book Club an interesting twist on the tale of Scheherazade, the storyteller in One Thousand and One Nights. Gia McCollister hosted the group at her home in late January and added her special touches to the buffet featuring foods and spices noted in the book.

BOYTON Lucille Govino
Our November Chocolate Event was a complete sellout with Julie Burba greeting members with a magnificent reception table complete with charcuterie, cheeses, assorted breads and delectable gougères. As we nibbled and sipped prosecco and rosé, Master Chocolatier Delphin Gomes took us through the process of seeding, a tempering method for chocolate. After some instruction, we got down to business and started the rotation of work table to stove to refrigeration. Within an hour of concentrated work, we were able to see progress. Ultimately gorgeous chocolates with painted designs emerged with a big smack of their molds. Voilà, un grand succès! We all left with a box of sweets and a Cambridge School bag designed to create a strong bridge between area schools and local farms. As part of the chapter’s Green Tables program, the Dames plan to assist the organization with hands-on gardening activities, administrative and leadership needs, and a cooking contest for the kids. There were also discussions about scholarships and upcoming chapter fundraising activities including a spring Culinary Academy.
Sarah Adams suggested the formation of a new Mentorship Committee within the group. After the discussion, a vote passed and Dames are planning to meet with area women over coffee and pastries to talk about mentoring opportunities.

CHARLESTON Susan Slack
Charleston Dames met at Le Creuset Headquarters for a January business meeting. A program was presented by Liz Ramirez, the executive director of Earth Heart Growers, a nonprofit organization designed to create a strong bridge between area schools and local farms. As part of the chapter’s Green Tables program, the Dames plan to assist the organization with hands-on gardening activities, administrative and leadership needs, and a cooking contest for the kids. There were also discussions about scholarships and upcoming chapter fundraising activities including a spring Culinary Academy. Sarah Adams suggested the formation of a new Mentorship Committee within the group. After the discussion, a vote passed and Dames are planning to meet with area women over coffee and pastries to talk about mentoring opportunities.

CLEVELAND Elaine T. Cicora
More than a dozen Cleveland Dames and their guests (a group of potential recruits that included a beekeeper, a restaurant owner, a culinary consultant, and a writer with strong links to the food industry) gathered at the Hildebrandt Building, a culinary incubator, on November 13, for our bi-monthly business meeting. A program was presented by Liz Ramirez, the executive director of Earth Heart Growers, a nonprofit organization designed to create a strong bridge between area schools and local farms. As part of the chapter’s Green Tables program, the Dames plan to assist the organization with hands-on gardening activities, administrative and leadership needs, and a cooking contest for the kids. There were also discussions about scholarships and upcoming chapter fundraising activities including a spring Culinary Academy. Sarah Adams suggested the formation of a new Mentorship Committee within the group. After the discussion, a vote passed and Dames are planning to meet with area women over coffee and pastries to talk about mentoring opportunities.

L-R: Paige Crone, Nathalie Dupree, Angela Dupree, Susan Wigley, Sarah Adams, Jen Kulick, Lauren Utvich. Photo: Susan Slack

Maria Isabella’s Spiced Hummus with Preserved Lemons.

Maria Isabella’s Spiced Hummus with Preserved Lemons.

Marla Holmes demonstrated her artisanal bread; Melissa McClelland showed us how to create her popular mushroom pâté; and using a recipe from her recently published cookbook, Chefs & Company, Maria Isabella demo’d a quick and easy recipe for Spiced Hummus with Preserved Lemons. The recipe originated with chef and James Beard Award-winning cookbook author Joanne Weir (San Francisco). Members in attendance also heard from Paula Hershman and Elaine Cicora, who reported on some of the highlights of the LDEI Newport Beach conference.
COLORADO Megan Stromberg
LDEI Colorado Chapter Holiday Potluck Party
At our post-holiday celebration, each Dame contributed one of her unique and favorite dishes. It was a delightful brunch; resolutions were shared as well as hopes and dreams for the future. 2018 looks bright for the Colorado Chapter!

DALLAS Lisa Stewart
One of our chapter’s favorite ways to give back to the community is volunteering for The Stewpot Ladies Holiday Luncheon. It is an annual event where we cook, feed and serve almost 100 homeless women, providing them a nutritious hot meal, including Mynetta Cockerell’s Cheddar Biscuits and sparkling grape juice in champagne flutes. It was an honor to make these women feel special and appreciated.

At our December Board Meeting, we held our first (and it won’t be our last!) Holiday Cocktail Competition. Jennifer Brightman won the contest with her drink, “The Spicy Dame.” The award-winning vodka used in the drink was donated by Julia Fuqua and her Duckworth Distillery, and will be served at our annual holiday party. The recipe will be available on our chapter website www.ldedallas.org.

As we departed 2017, we continued to plan for our biggest scholarship fundraising event, A Super-Dame Good Party, which will be held on the evening of March 4th.

MINNESOTA Janice Cole
Betsy Nelson arranged a tour for Minnesota Dames at Open Arms of Minnesota in November. This amazing nonprofit organization cooks delicious nourishing foods that are delivered free to people living with life-threatening illnesses. This year, Open Arms will deliver 600,000 meals to neighbors in need, a task that’s accomplished with only a small full-time staff working with over 6,000 volunteers. It was an awe-inspiring visit for our Dames.

For our mid-December gathering, Minnesota Dames enjoyed an informal get-together at The Lynhall, a market-inspired café, event space, and studio in Minneapolis. It was a relaxing and fun evening, Cindy Jurgensen graciously invited one of our scholarship recipients, Emily Pollock, giving us all a chance to meet her and learn about her schooling and future plans.

MONTEREY BAY Carol Hilburn
We were proud to host an induction ceremony for new Dames and for new Disciples of Escoffier on October 10, 2017. The event was held at Quail Lodge Golf Club, Carmel Valley, and the over 100 guests enjoyed a reception and four-course dinner paired with wines—including Archery Summit, Chappellet, CimaCollina, and Scheid—supplied by Dames from the Monterey Bay Chapter. The new Dames welcomed into the chapter are Marleen Burch, Loree Dowse, Rachel Gaffen, Lee Logan, Lura Migdal, Anita Cook Motard, Karen Ann Murray, Aimee Padden, Cheryl Pogue, Judie Profeta, and Tanja Roos. The silent and live auctions raised funds for scholarships and for the chapter’s annual donation to the Escoffier Museum and the Brock Circle.

On Saturday, December 9th, Rachel Mueller opened her charming home, high up on the Big Sur coast, to host Dames for a Christmas Silver Tea. The weather was extraordinarily beautiful as we were the views of the coastline and the elegant buffet and tea service prepared for the enjoyment of the attendees. Happy New Year to all from beautiful Monterey Bay!
Special Collections at New York University, where our Chapter’s archives are housed. The opening reception, produced by the 2017 Annual Meeting Committee chaired by Beth Allen, set the celebratory mood. Chapter President Joan Brower opened the business meeting, congratulating committee heads and officers for their excellent performances during 2017 and committee reports followed. Our special, sincere thanks go to: Fales Director Marvin J. Taylor for hosting; Ursula Massoud of Paumanok Vineyards for the superb wines; and to Megan Neisser of Whole Foods for the beautiful platters of delicious classic cheeses and signature charcuterie. The evening made us all very proud to be Dames!

**NORTH CAROLINA** Susi Gott Séguret

North Carolina Dames gathered in the mountainous city of Asheville for their November meeting, stepping outside the boundaries of work to celebrate around the table and explore Asheville’s culinary treasures while together. Katie Button welcomed the members in her tasteful meeting room at Curate, and later that evening regaled them with delights at her second ultra-elegant restaurant, Night Bell. Beth Frith brought along a basket of heirloom apples from a local producer, and shared them with all before parting.

Some of the delights enjoyed via Chef Button’s hand were roasted beets with whipped bone marrow, smoked pecans and fennel flowers, sautéed Olivette Farm spring greens with lardons, pickled Vidalia onion, poached egg and cornbread crumble, and house made French fries with rocket sauce.


**PALM SPRINGS** Pam Bieri

Dame Nancy Cohee talked with guests about dates, citrus and grapes, the three major crops grown in the Coachella Valley, at the Palm Springs LDEI Farm Tour in November. The annual Farm Tour benefits the Chapter’s Green Tables initiatives. In other news, the Chapter also enjoyed a festive holiday party at Bernie’s in Rancho Mirage and held a Workforce Development luncheon and conference for the county’s hospitality industry. Photo: Pam Bieri

**PHILADELPHIA** Jacquie Kelly

Philadelphia was excited to be one of the stops on the Cherry Bombe Cookbook Tour on November 14th. Natanya DiBona, Lynn Buono, Marie Stecher and Zoe Lukas participated in the event at Barbuzzo Upstairs that welcomed Cherry Bombe founders Kerry Diamond and Claudia Wu and brought together some of the city’s incredible women in food.

The Chapter kicked off the holiday shopping season with a Women Who Write Cookbook event at Mariella Esposito’s Fante’s Kitchen Shop, located in the historic Philadelphia Italian Market. The event featured seven of our city’s accomplished cookbook authors: Tenaya Darlington, Amanda Feifer, Aliza Green, Joy Manning, Marisa McClellan, Jessica Nolen, and Holly Ricciardi. Attendees met the authors, purchased cookbooks, and enjoyed samples and demonstrations.

In addition to our annual holiday cocktail party, generously hosted by Sofitel Philadelphia this year, we also held our Annual Winter Potluck dinner just a few weeks later at Yolanta Roman’s 19th century Victorian gothic Silverstone Bed & Breakfast. In keeping with the location, the theme for the afternoon was an afternoon tea. Marie Fritz gave an informal lesson on the tradition of tea service and the art of the table.

Dames also organized a Sustainable Seafood Workshop presented by Samuels & Son Seafood. The interactive workshop was led by Joe Lasprogata, marine biologist and vice president of Samuels & Son, and Executive Chef Anne Coll. It included a tour the facility and a light lunch featuring sustainable products seen on our tour.

**SAN ANTONIO** Blanca Aldaco

The San Antonio Chapter was honored to host LDEI Founder Carol Brock for a fun 48 hours December 10-12. The main focus for Carol’s visit was to witness the 8th annual filet mignon dinner, gingerbread house decorating, and gift giving for 18 at-risk children ranging in age from 10 to 18 years old. The weather was perfect. Within 30 minutes of leaving the airport, Carol enjoyed a churro, a chicharron gordita, and a tamal in San Antonio’s Historic Market Square. Later that evening, Carol cruised the famous Riverwalk on a private barge with several other Dames on board. Monday morning, a private tour was arranged by Di-Anna Arias. The Texas flag in front of The Alamo was flown for the day in Carol’s honor and later presented to her as a souvenir. The finale was a well attended luncheon to celebrate Carol’s birthday.

San Antonio Dames at their 8th annual filet mignon dinner, left to right Di-Anna Arias, Maureen Weissman, Marilyn Magaro, Miss Bernal, Lila Bernal, Nancy Fitch, Tracey Maurer, Mary Martini, Diana Barrios Trevino, Leslie Komet-Ausburn, Kim Mauldin; kneeling, left to right, Jennifer Vitera, Kay Shumake, Carol Brock, Blanca Aldaco, Dion Turner
Amy Emberling Scholarship Success Story: Boston to Ann Arbor

By Sandra Lach Arlinghaus (Ann Arbor)

LDEI’s investment in Amy Emberling (Ann Arbor) has been returned to the culinary community in manifold ways. Amy holds a B.A. from Harvard College and an M.B.A. from Columbia University, but it was a $10,000 fellowship from the Boston Chapter in 1991 that enabled her to go to Paris, France, to study culinary arts at L’Ecole de Gastronomie Française, Ritz Hotel. This launched her on a spectacular culinary career.

Now Amy is a star baker and long-time managing partner of Zingerman’s Bakehouse. She expresses her appreciation to Les Dames and, especially, to her local Ann Arbor Chapter in countless ways. With her support, Zingerman’s Bakehouse became a “Friend Sponsor” of LDEI. She has donated considerable resources to the initiation and development of our local chapter’s scholarship fund. Indeed, it was Amy’s Bakehouse scholarship donation that sponsored our University of Michigan Nutrition Masters degree candidates’ attendance at our chapter’s Downton Abbey fundraiser held at our chapter’s home, the City Club of Ann Arbor, in December.

On February 20, the San Diego Dames gathered at Kari Volyn’s La Jolla home for a Member Spotlight, appetizer potluck, and cookbook exchange.
ATLANTA

Holly Beach announced that in 2017, she received an MBA degree from Washington State University with a specialty in hospitality.

Jennifer Hill Booker cooked her French-inspired Southern cuisine during her Cast Iron Chronicles dinner at The James Beard House. Jennifer is a culinary explorer for the Georgia Department of Tourism and Travel and sits on both the James Beard Foundation Food Waste Advisory Council and the 2018 No Kid Hungry Atlanta Society Board. www.chefjenniferhillbooker.com Photo: Shelby Light

BIRMINGHAM

Brooke Bell has been promoted to Vice President Culinary & Custom Content at Hoffman Media. www.hoffmanmedia.com

Ashley McMakin, owner/operator of Ashley Mac’s, opened a new location in Homewood’s SOHO Square in February 2018. This is the fourth Ashley Mac’s location. www.ashleymacs.com

Jan Walsh’s BirminghamRestaurants.com has been named an Amazon Influencer by Amazon.com. This new program recognizes businesses that have large social media followings on Instagram and/or Twitter and has a new page of food product recommendations for home cooks.

BOSTON

Maria Speck, award-winning cookbook author, contributed to the book Modernist Bread. Her recent media appearances included interviews for Heritage Radio’s Modernist Bread Crumbs; a panel on New England grains and fresh milling at Boston’s Let’s Talk about Food festival; and a reading from her book Simply Ancient Grains at the Boston Book Festival.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Leann Froese, owner of Town Hall Brands in Vancouver, has been named by The Organization of American Women in Public Relations as one of ten women in the field who leads, inspires, and builds successful brands. She has been creating and promoting brands for 21 years. Photo: Hannes van der Merwe

Eagranie Yuh is proud that her story about Tayybeh, a pop-up restaurant and catering company run by Syrian refugees, was published in Saveur (www.saveur.com/tayybeh-vancouver-immigrant-dinner-series). She also shared Vancouver dining picks in the December 17, 2017, Food section of The Washington Post.

NEW ENGLAND

Denise Landis re-launched The Cook’s Cook as a multimedia company serving the community of cooks, food writers and recipe testers. The re-launch includes a revamped website, recipe archives, Community Forum, and a TV show titled, “Outside & In with The Cook’s Cook.” Photo: Eva Baughman

Barbara Lauterbach attended a food writers’ workshop in December held in Chignon France, under the leadership of Domenica Marchetti (Washington, D.C.). “We learned how food journalism is different from straight journalism and were given writing assignments which involved going to the markets, vineyards, and restaurants.

NEW YORK

Julie Hartigan of CookingwJulie.com worked with Weight Watchers to launch their new Wellness Cruises and received rave reviews for the 100 recipes she developed, which were served to 1000s of passengers. In addition, she taught chefs how to prepare the items, and did cooking demos for over 200 people at a time.


Marsha Palanci, who successfully ran Cornerstone Communications for 25 years, has switched gears to become a wine marketing consultant and blogger. Her new blog, www.tartetatin tales.com, shares random musings on life, current affairs, culture, fashion and naturally, food, and wine, her two areas of expertise. Photo: Joan Ross

Mary Rodgers was inducted into the Direct Marketing News Hall of Femme, an annual program recognizing the best and brightest female talent in the marketing industry. She further expanded the scope of her marketing expertise by earning a digital marketing certification from the Wharton School and certification from the Google-Columbia CMO Academy.

Stefanie Sacks, MS, CNS, CDN, is a culinary nutritionist, author, consultant, and founder of REBOOT FOOD™. She transforms the way people eat through hands on culinary experiences and is the author of What The Fork Are You Eating? An Action Plan for Your Pantry and Plate.

NORTH CAROLINA

Susan Dosier of DK Communications Group in Charlotte announced a new client: Randolph County N.C. Tourism Development Association. The county is home to the “Handmade Pottery Capital of the USA” in Seagrove, North Carolina, where more than 100 individual potters work and sell their pottery which includes food and dishwasher-safe cookware.

Keia Mastrianni was named one of 30 Women Moving Southern Food Forward, a list published online by Southern Living Magazine. She was also recognized for her work as deputy editor of “Crop Stories: A Journal Exploring Farm Culture in the American South,” which focuses on telling real stories about the agricultural South.

Nancie McDermott’s recipe story, “Lost Pies of the South,” made the cover of Southern Living magazine’s November issue. A fall book tour for her book, Fruit: a
Carolyn Kumpe was contracted as a food consultant/recipe developer for the Vacaville Unified School District Nutrition Program in Northern California by Director Juan Cordova to revamp their school lunch program. A key objective was to focus on farmer direct ingredients from Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF) to create nutritious and delicious school lunches. www.vacavilleusd.org/childnutrition

SUSI GOTT SÉGURET, CCP, CSW, has launched a new series of monthly foraging/cooking/dining events called the Appalachian Culinary Experience. These are designed as a complement to the week-long sessions of her Seasonal School of Culinary Arts and will artfully weave music and stories into the fabric of the evening. www.schoolofculinaryarts.org

Stephanie Tyson and her partner Vivian Joiner celebrate 15 years in business for their restaurant “Sweet Potatoes (well shut my mouth!!) - a restaurant.” Through the success of their restaurant, they have been a noted part of the growth of downtown Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

PHILADELPHIA
Rita Cinelli assumed the role of development officer for Camden City Garden Club, an educational and environmental organization established in 1985 to assist Camden, New Jersey, residents. Programs of this non-profit include Community Gardening and Greening, Grow Lab and Nutrition Education, Community Youth Employment, and Camden Children’s Garden. www.camdencommunitygarden.org

PORTLAND
Ivy Manning announced the publication of her seventh cookbook, Italian Instant Pot (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt). The book includes 100 recipes for regional Italian specialties, family favorites, easy one-pot pasta meals, and desserts to make the most of this all-in-one appliance. Photo: Dina Avila

SACRAMENTO
Mary Kimball welcomed 2018 aboard the Scotts Miracle-Gro float in the 129th Rose Parade whose theme was “Making a Difference.” Her nonprofit, Center for Land-Based Learning, helps farmers and businesses get started in the agricultural industry and provides fresh products to the community via such programs as the West Sacramento Urban Farms.

Carolyn Kumpe

San Diego
Jodi Abel, owner of Lajollacooks4u, a team building and cooking-events company, celebrated 10 years in business. The company has hosted guests from all over the world. Abel also published her cookbook, Lajollacooks4u: California Cuisine, an accumulation of favorite client-requested recipes.

SAN FRANCISCO
Dianne Jacob announced that she will be co-teaching a food and wine writing workshop in Verona, Italy, in April. The workshop combines writing and instruction with luxury accommodations and local winery and restaurant visits. https://demetguzey.com/2017/11/21/food-and-wine-writing-workshop/

SEATTLE
Maria Coassin, owner of Gelatiamo, gelateria and bakery in Seattle, makes 1,200 panettone every holiday season. This year food writer, Ron Holden wrote about her Italian roots in an article about the confection for Forbes. It had international reach for “the Queen of Panettone,” as she was dubbed.

Renee Erickson, renowned James Beard Award winner, will open a bar and Italian restaurant in 2018 in the new Amazon Spheres complex in north downtown Seattle near the Bell Town neighborhood. She was influenced by the time she spent in Italy while a college student.

Rose Ann Finkel and husband, Charles, Founders of Pike Brewing Co., were panel members discussing Pike Place Market and Settle’s craft brewing history, which was held in the Pike Place Market Atrium and hosted by The American Brewing History Initiative of the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History in conjunction with the Brewers Association.

Kari Leitch, Vice President of Communications and Corporate Affairs for Ste. Michelle Wine Estates, was project manager on their $7 million retail, kitchen, and event facility renovation, which coincided with the 50th anniversary of the company. www.smwe.com

Jamie Peha, founder and principal of Peha Promotions, was named Director of the Auction of Washington Wines Private Barrel Auction. This exclusive trade tasting and live auction of one-of-a-kind, limited production futures from Washington’s most noted winemakers takes place every August.

SOUTH FLORIDA
Irene Moore was selected by the Region of South Aegean as the United States coordinator for “Tasting the Treasures of the Aegean,” a promotional lunch and dinner held on March 13 at the James Beard House which recognized the Region of South Aegean as the “European Region of Gastronomy 2019.”

Robyn Webb, CITM, MS, cookbook author, nutritionist, and culinary instructor, launched “Paris Your Way, Signature Arrangements by Robyn Webb.” Her new boutique agency designs customized journeys to Paris and other locales within France, with culinary artisans, top-notch guides, and access to open doors not usually open to the public. www.Parisyourway.net

WASHINGTON, D.C.
Patrice Dionot and her husband, Francois, have closed their 41-year-old Maryland-based L’Academie de Cuisine, considered one of the top cooking schools in America, ending its history of supplying chefs to the D.C. restaurant community and beyond. The last graduation ceremony was held in December.

Paula Shoyer just published her new book, The Healthy Jewish Kitchen: Fresh, Contemporary Recipes for Every Occasion (Sterling Epicure, 2017). It offers recipes for more healthful Jewish classics that are also updated for the modern table, along with international and American recipes that reflect food trends beyond the Jewish culinary world. Her book was featured in The Washington Post’s January 2 Food section, and that article was picked up in papers across the U.S.
Brock Circle Goal is $1 Million

By Stacy Zeigler, LDEI Immediate Past President

Thanks to the stock donation plan and a year-end giving request, we added three new members to the Brock Circle in December: Barbara Hanley, Tina Krinsky, and Sharon Olson. This brings our total to 51 members who have pledged $510,000 to date.

The purpose of the Brock Circle is to ensure the fiscal health of the organization—both now and going forward—for strategic needs and to enable conference enhancement, all aligned with the mission of LDEI. Our Brock Circle Oversight Committee is hard at work to build membership as well as put these funds to good use. Up to 40% of the donations collected each year, can be used the following year.

Currently with the approval of the super majority of the LDEI Board, we have earmarked funds for the revision of our LDEI Membership Brochure as well as funding for a breakout session at our Seattle Conference on Collaborative Communications by Anne Smoke, back by popular demand. We have also started vetting an idea for a virtual leadership program. You’ll be hearing more about this idea.

Our Brock Circle goal is 100 members, pledging $1000 a year for 10 years, which will total $1,000,000. Please let me know if you would like to be our 52nd member! My email is szeigler1949@yahoo.com.

WHAT DOCUMENTS CAN YOU FIND ON THE LDEI WEBSITE?

Looking for something? Maybe a new member form, an LDEI logo, or the LDEI bylaws? It’s amazing what you can find at www.ldei.org.

First, click on Member Login on the blue ribbon at the top of the home page. Then log in as a member with your Username (your email address) and Password (only you know this) and click on Login. If you are having difficulty with the system, just send an email to info@ldei.org.

If you got into the member area, click on “Documents.” Here’s a sampling of what you can download.

LDEI Logos and Program Logos (Green Tables, GCI, award logos)

Chapter Presidents Resources
- 2018 Chapter Presidents Calendar
- New Member Form (fillable)
- LDEI History PowerPoint
- Insurance Program Services
- Cohesive LDEI Membership Criteria:
  - LDEI Bylaws
  - LDEI Business Cards (template)

Photo Release Form

Membership Directory
- 2018 LDEI printable directory.pdf
- Mobile directory message for new members

2017 Annual Conference - List of Attendees

Keep browsing around to find other treasures.—CiCi Williamson
Hearth baked breads, rich coffeecakes, holiday baskets, luscious buttercream cakes, handmade cheeses and gelati, estate bottled olive oils and customized business gifts

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Jeffrey Steingarten, NPR

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Seattle Malaysian Dinner

By Karen Binder

The Seattle Chapter of LDEI held a Malaysian Global Culinary Initiative event with great success. The featured chef was Christina Arokiasamy—cookbook author, teaching chef, and Malaysia’s first official food ambassador to the U.S.—aided by Kimberly Smith, Pastry Chef Teacher Instructor at South Seattle College, Culinary Arts Program. Christina, whose mother was a spice merchant, gave a talk on Malaysian cuisine and spices. Her main point about Malaysian cuisine is that there is, in fact, NO specific Malaysian cuisine; it is an aggregation of Portuguese, Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, etc. Decorations included Malaysian batik tablecloths, woven baskets, and bowls of various spices and aromatic leaves. We were treated to a five-course dinner consisting of Penang Pork Satay, curried puffs with sweet potatoes and peas, Portuguese Debal Prawns, mango salad with cashews, and wild cod in candlenut, makrut lime and coconut sambal. The sweet ending was Chef Christina’s special caramel sauce on ice cream. Christina’s newly released cookbook, The Malaysian Kitchen, was for sale. Amanda Breville of World Spice donated to each guest a package of four spices most used in Malaysian cuisine: cinnamon, allspice, cardamom, and cloves. Karen Binder, chair of the GCI committee, paired the meal with Northwest Wine Academy Muller Thurgau and Rosé.
SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

DEADLINES
SUMMER ISSUE – APRIL 10, 2018 | FALL ISSUE – AUGUST 1, 2018
WINTER ISSUE – NOVEMBER 10, 2018

MEMBER MILESTONES membermilestones@aol.com
Email to Member Milestone Editor, Dottie Koteski by the deadline listed above. Include:
• CHAPTER
• DAME’S NAME
• Maximum 50 words for each Dame about personal honors or accomplishments, but not about new product introductions or other promotions. Please include a website URL, if applicable. Press releases and cookbook covers are NOT accepted.
PHOTO: You may email a high resolution quality headshot to accompany your news (see below). You must submit a photo permissions form for the photo.
Note: Due to space constraints, only two Member Milestones will be published per Dame per year.

CHAPTER PROGRAMS chapterprograms@aol.com
Email up to 250 words about chapter events that have already occurred to Chapter News Editor, Nina Mukerjee Furstenau by the deadline listed above. Include:
• CHAPTER
• SUBMITTER’S NAME
• Maximum 250 words for each chapter.
• Captions for all photos submitted. Submissions that exceed 250 words will be edited to comply.
Press releases are not accepted. We regret we don’t have space to print full menus but menu items can be included in the copy.
Note: “Chapter Programs” and “Member Milestones” may be dispersed through LDEI social-media channels, as well as in print and online.

PHOTOGRAPHY/IMAGES
• Electronic images must be properly focused and in color with a minimum resolution of 300 dpi (TIFF or JPEG).
• Cell phone photos are acceptable if they meet requirements.
• Do not send photos taken off the Internet or embedded with text in Word files or PDF files.
• Include photo credits, if required.
• A photo permissions form must be submitted.
• A maximum of three photos can be submitted per chapter.
• ALL PHOTOGRAPHS MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY CAPTIONS OR THEY WILL NOT BE PUBLISHED.

LDEI regrets that we cannot include lengthy profiles of individual Dames due to space limitations. Dames’ accomplishments should be submitted to “Member Milestones” or to LDEI’s Closed Group on Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/groups/218435184886471/

E-NEWS (Not for the Quarterly) This bimonthly email newsletter reports upcoming events in other chapters. Include title, date, time, cost, a one-sentence description, and an email contact for your chapter’s events. Send E-News to the editor: Diane Wheeler, at ldeinews@gmail.com or incircle1@yahoo.com.

UPCOMING in the summer issue
• Dames with Brilliant Second Careers
• Flavors of Mexico - Yucatan
LDEI Atlanta: An Evening in Japan

By Suzanne Brown (Atlanta)

“Though you wipe your hands and brush off the dust and dirt from the vessels, what is the use of all this fuss if the heart is still impure?” Sen no Rikyū, 16th Century Tea Master.

Atlanta Dames were transported to Japan while experiencing the tastes of the indigenous cuisine and culture presented by Chef Fuyuhiko Ito and his wife, Chef Lisa Ito, owners of the exclusive Umi Modern Japanese Restaurant in chic Buckhead. The program was held in the Himitsu Japanese Lounge located above Umi. Whether fate or kismet, Chef Fuyuhiko and Chef Lisa are from Tokyo, but never met until both were working for a restaurant in Buckhead. They decided to marry and merge their two families, settling in Roswell with their six children.

Japan’s diverse landscape stretches from the tropical southern island of Kyushu to the wintery highlands of northern Hokkaido, in which Pacific climates meet Siberian winds. This diversity provides a variety of regional delicacies that have evolved from the country’s islands. Trademark specialties are based on each island’s ecology:

- **Honshu Island**—Japan’s largest island is known for Sasa Kamaboko (fish cake shaped like bamboo grass) in the Tōhoku region; uniquely prepared tofu in Kansai; and fukagawa meshi—a rice bowl with clams, leeks, and miso—in the Kanto region.
- **Shikoku Island**—The proximity of Japan’s smallest island to the Northern Pacific Ocean makes it an ideal location for bonito; the Kagawa region is famous for wheat flour noodles called sanuki udon.
- **Kyushu Island**—Specialties vary on this southernmost island. Mizutaki is chicken hot pot, popular in Fukuoka. Another favorite is hiyajiru, made by pouring chilled fish-and-miso-based soup over hot rice. Miyazaki mango and the yellow citrus fruit hyuganatsu are also specialties.
- **Okinawa Island**—Located between Japan’s main islands and Taiwan, people of this region enjoy the greatest longevity in the world. They are among the least likely to suffer from chronic diseases of aging; the secret… goya—a bitter melon, stir-fried with egg, tofu, vegetables, and pork.

- **Hokkaido Island**—Japan’s northernmost island is known for fresh seafood harvested in its crisp northern seas. Ishikari nabé is a popular hot pot dish with salmon chunks, vegetables, tofu, and konyaku (devil’s tongue jelly). Genghis Khan, a barbequed lamb dish, is also a favorite. While Dames enjoyed dishes especially prepared by the chefs, a PowerPoint presentation on Japan’s culture, food, and traditions was presented by Tomoko Ohyama, who is Consul for Cultural and Information Affairs at the Atlanta Japanese Consulate. Colorful slides depicted festivals, foods, and several kinds of saké, among information on the Japanese Tea Ceremony.

Throughout the evening, Dames experienced the custom of Omotenashi, or Japanese hospitality. True Omotenashi, a concept derived from Chanoyu, the ancient, traditional tea ceremony, can never be attained with a training manual. It is a one-to-one relationship that changes from customer-to-customer…from moment-to-moment. Gratitude towards the customer is a key part of Omotenashi, the part that warms the encounter and makes the host smile.