Les Dames d’Escoffier International
Quarterly
Spring 2016

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Flight OSS

Tasty Travels
Dames Who Lead Culinary Tours Abroad

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Les Dames d’Escoffier International
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FROM THE EDITOR
Talking about Travel

My husband is definitely the strong, silent type. He says I talk too much. Well, it’s a good thing I do—especially to other Dames, or I wouldn’t have discussed Sue Carter’s idea with Valentina Harris (both London) at the Charleston conference. Sue suggested we write about Dames who lead culinary tours abroad. Valentina proposed to write a story about her chapter Dame, Isabel Aspillera (pictured on the cover—the one wearing sunglasses), who takes gourmets to the Basque region.

Furthermore, I found out—yes, more talking, John—that not only does Valentina have a huge part in planning the “Edible London” tours, she herself leads tours to Italy and France. Co-editor Susan Slack (Charleston), LDEI Second Vice President Ann Stratte (Washington, D.C.), and I discussed it and agreed this would make an interesting feature about this profession of many Dames.

The two-dozen Dames whose stories appear on pages 4-16 were those who responded to my eBlast sent out to our more-than 2100 Dames by Executive Director Greg Jewell, proving that the early birds get the ink. Many more Dames also lead culinary tours, and I regret not having enough pages to write about all. But we editors try to spotlight as many different Dames as possible; every Dame is a star!

Even though I wanted to include Teri Sandison (San Francisco) and Joan Nathan (Washington, D.C.), who also lead tours, we wrote a page about Teri in the summer 2014 food stylists-and-photographers feature, and our newest Grande Dame Joan was our cover girl for the fall 2015 issue. They’ll be in your directory, though.

While yours truly doesn’t lead professional travel tours, I certainly have eaten my way around the world—to every continent, U.S. state, Canadian province (except Nunavut), and more than 100 countries. So I very much appreciate the work these Dames do when planning culinary group tours. You won’t see my byline on each of these articles, but I wrote all of them with the Dames’ approvals. I hope you will find these Dames and their stories as interesting as I did.

For example, who knew you could go with Guida Ponte (Boston) on a culinary tour of the Azores, Haley Nguyen (Los Angeles/Orange County to Cambodia, or Carrie McDougall (Boston) to Antarctica! Been there, but all I know about cooking a penguin is “roast it to 165 °F.” And how did I learn that? By talking to people—in this case, to the USDA Meats and Poultry Hotline.

—CiCi Williamson, Editor, Spring Quarterly
**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

“Cheers to another 30 years!”

Spring is nature’s way of saying, “Let’s Celebrate!” This feels like a good way to begin my message. First I’d like to celebrate our organization’s history. On October 27, 1986, (close to the New York Chapter’s 10th anniversary on November 8), our international organization was officially launched at a gala dinner in the lobby of the New York Daily News Building. Attending were the presidents of our first five chapters: New York, Washington, D.C.; Chicago; Dallas; and Philadelphia. The world’s largest globe was an appropriate backdrop to commemorate the growing 225-members of Les Dames d’Escoffier International (LDEI).

Today, 30 years later, with 36 chapters, 2,100 members, and very deep roots, we not only come together to celebrate our anniversary but also—most importantly—to celebrate the fulfillment of the legacy that our founding members envisioned. We all need to make 2016 “A Year to Remember,” and I encourage all chapters to celebrate this very important milestone.

The best way to celebrate is to attend the 2016 Annual Conference, “Global Appetite, Local Impact,” in Washington, D.C. During our board meeting in Seattle (see page 17), the Washington, D.C., committee gave us conference details, and I can promise you this year’s conference will be amazing. So please mark your calendar for October 27-30, 2016, and plan ahead. Washington is a very desirable destination, and the city always runs a very high hotel-occupancy! I am also pleased to announce that for the next three years, none of our conference dates will fall on the actual day of Halloween.

So, yes, “Let’s celebrate,” and as we raise our glasses to toast and applaud our success, history, accomplishments, and each other, let’s remember to use our hashtag #lDeI30 to post your celebrations on social media!

**ONGOING STRATEGIC PLAN**

2016 started with precise goals. Your board met face to face in Seattle this past January, and our meeting was very productive. We focused on setting up action steps for our ongoing strategic plan.

- Our goal is to continue strengthening our financial growth through Partnerships and along with AEC Management, First Vice President Stacy Zeigler (Atlanta) is developing a plan that will also bring additional financial support to our annual conference.
- We salute Hayley Matson-Mathes (Hawaii), who is serving her second year as our Third Vice President and once again has created a solid public relations plan that will include our 30th year anniversary and specifics on how we can celebrate it.
- Each of our six new chapters has unique leadership strengths and challenges. A board task force is bringing extra support to new chapters in their early stages of development.
- As we raise our glasses to celebrate our past 30 years, let’s not forget the reasons why we as an organization have come this far! It is through our passion, love, vision, mutual respect and support of one another, and our commitment to excellence that we will continue to grow—together and individually—as the incredible organization that we are today! It is a great privilege to be a Dame, so let’s keep true to our roots and celebrate each and every bloom, “Cheers to another 30 years!”

Maria Gomez-Laurenz
President, Les Dames d’Escoffier International

**2016 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.

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If the myth that “the earth is flat and you can sail off the edge of it” were true, Dames leading culinary tours literally go to “the ends of the earth” to show their travelers cuisines of the world. From the Azores to Vietnam, Dames featured here conscientiously plan, orchestrate, and guide small groups of two to 25 inquisitive gourmets to more than 30 countries and every continent. More Dames (59) lead such tours than Quarterly pages permit. Here are stories about 24 Dames representing 18 chapters including three of our newest chapters: Ann Arbor, Kentucky, and Nashville. Also included are Dames from our London and British Columbia Chapters. To locate more Dames who lead tours, look in your LDEI Directory’s Professional Skills Index under “Culinary Tours.” Tasty Travels!

—CiCi Williamson

CiCi at Lands End, the most westerly point of mainland Cornwall and England.

► Isabel Aspillera (London)

Northern Spain and Southwest France
www.travelsandtapas.com

If you want to bask in the Basque region, choose Isabel Aspillera as your tour guide. In addition to their London home, she and Jose Macicior have a home in Navarre—Palacio de Reparace, which is her husband’s ancestral seat belonging to his family since the 14th Century.

To get there, you’d drive on the A-15 from St. Sebastian on the Bay of Biscay up over 2,000 feet and 60 miles through the Pyrenees Mountains. About 20 minutes past Pamplona (yes, that “Running of the Bulls” Pamplona), you would arrive at Isabel’s home that was a hotel from 1886 to 1958. It received the likes of the Duke of Wellington, Edward VII, Ernest Hemingway, and other historical figures. The house was renowned for its cooking, and the tradition has passed down through the generations.

“My husband and I have always been keen on the culinary arts, and we are both accomplished cooks. We travel the world looking for new flavors, but we concentrate on the northern areas of our own country, known for having the best gastronomy in all of Spain. Due to family connections, we are in the best position to open privately-owned stately homes in the region that are otherwise closed to the public. We have organized meals at such homes with great success,” revealed Isabel.

Tours with Isabel—two to three per year for groups of 12 to 16—including Northern Spain (San Sebastian and Bilbao in the Spanish Basque Country); Navarre; La Rioja (wine region); and Santiago de Compostella in Galicia.

In Southwest France the tour covers tres élégant Biarritz, St Jean de Luz, St Jean de Pied de Port, Sara, Ainhoa, and the Loire Valley châteaux.

Isabel has been arranging and leading tours for 14 years. But she continuously nurtures family tradition, experience, and an intimate knowledge of the region to discover more. “Needless to say,” she said, “our tours are a revelation of the best, world-class Michelin-star dishes. For example, San Sebastian, with 170,000 inhabitants, has a total of 16 Michelin stars—the highest ratio in the world.”

On tour, you could enjoy patatas a la Riojana (potatoes Rioja style); hongos (wild cèpes); truchas a la Navarra (trout in the Navarrese style); spectacular fish and shellfish dishes along the Bay of Biscay; chuletón de buey (on the bone beef steaks—possibly from those bulls that didn’t run fast enough!); cordero al chilindron (lamb stew Navarrese style); and fantastic tapas.

Chrisie Walker, Vice President of the London Chapter, went on one of Isabel’s tours and wrote, “It was such a fascinating and rewarding time. Had it not been for Isabel and Jose, Gina and I would never have had access to what are in fact monuments and such lovely cuisine. I can only hope other Dames and lovers of food and history take advantage of what this region has to offer.”
Janet Chrzan (Philadelphia)
France’s Loire Valley
http://historicrentals.com/culinary/

Arranging tours began locally in 1998 for Janet Chrzan, Ph.D., a nutritional anthropologist at the University of Pennsylvania, in conjunction with a course she taught. This progressed from day treks in the Philadelphia region to an eight-day tour to Tuscany in 2006 that she organized and led for the Archeology and Anthropology Museum at Penn. “We explored the region to better understand the food, wine, and agricultural history,” explained Janet.

In 2009, she started organizing and leading tours to France’s Loire Valley, again focusing on food history in relation to the terroir of the region. Janet partners with Historic Rentals, a company owned by an American who spends half of his time in Bourgueil, France, at his 1750s Chateau des Sablons, which he operates as a gite for tourists. Here Janet’s six-to-12 tour members are housed in their own apartments.

“From this base, we visit local towns (Chinon, Saumur, Tours, and Montsoreau) and chateaux (Villandry, Chenonceau, Rivau, Langeais, and others),” said Janet. “I prefer to visit all museums, shops, markets, chateaux, wineries and food production companies, and historic venues in advance, but I often leave the testing of restaurants to my local partners, who know the restaurateurs well.”

Challenges in arranging food travel tours are “Logistics, logistics, logistics,” Janet expressed. “Because sites and restaurants are scattered, planning has to be very careful—literally to the minute, which can be difficult when dealing with groups of people. Another challenge is ensuring quality experiences when using local experts or doing activities not under your control.”

Janet’s tours begin with a theme. One tour examined Medieval and Renaissance history, diet, and cuisine while visiting chateaux. They visited a 14th century castle; then cooked a period meal. One facet of each tour is an amusing cooking exercise that begins in the Tuesday-morning Bourgueil market—operating for 1500 years. Teams make up recipes, buy the ingredients, and then prepare it at the chateau for dinner. “Our groups start out fearful, but by lunch they are having so much fun at the market, discussing what’s in season, what looks good, what they can do with it, that they forget to be afraid of scratch cooking,” said Janet.

“Foods typical of the Loire are salmon, lentils, sausage, amazing greens, and vegetables. There is a classic fish dish—pike in green sauce, that’s purely medieval. Pork rillettes. The Loire is famous for mushrooms, goat cheese, and remarkable Cabernet franc and Chenin blanc wines.” In fact her May 2016 tour is designed to teach about the wines of the region.

Several people are repeaters since each tour is different. “One guest told me that staying at the chateau was like ‘being a queen for a week,’” revealed Janet.

As a keepsake, “We make photo books for participants with site pictures, the recipes we cooked, and the menus from the restaurants we visited.”

MaryBeth Lauer with Janet Chrzan teaching a cooking class in the kitchen of the Chateau des Sablons in Bourgueil. Photo by Heidi Stine

Michele Morris (Colorado)
Italy (Rome and Puglia)
http://cookingwithmichele.com

An Italian-speaking trained sommelier, Michele Morris has enjoyed taking eight to 10 people on 12-day yearly food and wine tours to the country of her ancestors since 2008. “I partner with The Awaiting Table Cookery School in Puglia where guests take cooking classes for six days and enjoy the beautiful baroque town of Lecce,” said Michele. “We also take a day trip to the UNESCO town of Otranto on the Adriatic Sea.”

“Beginning in Rome, we experience some ‘out of the box’ things. We tour the Jewish ghetto to understand the roots of Roman cuisine (and because the Jewish history in this largely Catholic country is fascinating), and we dine at my friend’s home. Then we head by train to Lecce five hours away. Although the train ride is usually uneventful, once a storm-caused mudslide blocked the tracks, and my first-class passengers were transferred to a crowded bus for the journey. They made the best of it and enjoyed plenty of pizza and wine when we finally arrived two hours late!”

Each year, Michele spends time testing new spots for upcoming trips and does her own bookings. “I never take guests to a restaurant or on a tour I’ve not experienced before,” she confided. “I first built my itinerary around things I wanted to do personally and invited friends to join me. They were so impressed that I began offering this tour publicly and have since expanded the itinerary.

“I survey guests prior to the trip to ensure everyone’s needs are met. Some just want to have fun, drink good wine, and watch the cooking teachers, while others expect to learn culinary skills to take home.”

“Italian food and wines are still very regional, and I try to ensure my guests know what to expect. The cuisine of Puglia is classic cucina povera, and people have lived off the land here for centuries. Foraged wild greens and fava beans are popular. Pasta is made without eggs—using only water and semolina, often combined with barley flour for a heartier dish. Orecchiette (pasta shaped like ‘little ears’ with broccoli rabe) is perhaps the most well-known pasta dish, and the pasta e ceci (chick peas) soup is a hearty classic.”

A participant commented, “I enjoyed the contrast—the touring, eating out, and shopping in the ‘big city’ of Rome, then going to the ‘small town’ of Lecce, going to the markets, preparing, cooking, and enjoying food and wine with new friends.”
to Austria, Croatia, Hungary and Croatia. “I enjoyed my trips so much, I thought they would appeal to my customers,” she said. “I approached Zingerman’s Food Tour Company and suggested that we create tours around our bakery travels.” Now in her third year, the September 2016 tour will be to Croatia.

“I initially focused my research on Hungarian baking. Those tours spent most of our time in Budapest and the Tokay region with a day trip to Szeged (the center of the famous Hungarian paprika industry). I recently traveled to Austria, Croatia, Hungary and Croatia. “I enjoyed my trips so much, I thought they would appeal to my customers,” she said. “I approached Zingerman’s Food Tour Company and suggested that we create tours around our bakery travels.” Now in her third year, the September 2016 tour will be to Croatia.

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Amy strives to make sure she is offering a unique way of looking at the sites so that people get a value-added bonus for travelling with her. Her effort succeeds. Wrote a pleased participant, “We had such a great time with every aspect: the food lessons, the ruins, the religious perspective, and really getting in touch with the current geopolitical conditions in the areas we visited. I’ve kept copies of the recipes and look forward to merging some into our household’s regular meals.”

Food specialties of Amy’s Turkish tour include pide, kebabs, gozleme, baklava, pilafs, seafood, and boreks. In Greece, Amy takes guests to a bakery built in 1400. The group enjoys moussaka, gyros, fresh feta, halloumi, yogurt, and cheeses, fresh octopus and seafood, Vin Santo, assyrtiko wine, fresh fava and tomato fritters from Santorini, roasted meat, and more. Yum!

Paulette Licitra (Nashville)
Italy: Venice, Veneto, Rome, Amalfi Coast, Campania www.ChefPaulette.net

As an undergraduate, Paulette Licitra lived in Rome for a year and has been back “many, many, many times—studying in the kitchens of many Italian home cooks.” She goes on to say, “I usually design tours of places I have already been, places I already know. My tours have become extensions of what I have done for years on my own, though my next trip will be different. We will all be exploring at the same time—someplace new, even for me.”

Since 2011, Paulette has offered yearly tours for eight people. She uses local wine tour guides and local chefs to teach cooking classes. Paulette sees the main challenges in planning tours to be the scheduling (getting everything to fit into the time available) and arranging air travel. She handles her own bookings—gleaned mainly by email to people who come to her cooking classes, and she uses a local travel agent for group air tickets. “My tour ideas come mainly from places I love and am anxious to share with people who are enthusiastic about food and Italy,” said Paulette. “I also always rent apartments in Italy to have a kitchen, and we shop the food markets and cook local dishes on site.”

Always there are unusual events while touring. Paulette remembers that half of one group decided to see a play in Amalfi. The theatre said that at the end of the play, they would provide transportation back to their hotel a few miles away. “As my group waited for their transportation after the show, they were giggly to find that one of the actors in the show was their chauffeur, and they were driven in his personal car,” related Paulette.

Some of the foods typical of her tour regions are:
- Amalfi: lemons. lemon pasta, lemon drinks, lemon with fish, Pesce Acqua Pazza, Limoncello, Spaghetti alla Vongole.
- Rome: Spaghetti alla Carbonara, Carciofi alla Giudea, Cacio e Peppe.
- Veneto: Sgroppino, baby scallops, soft-shell crab, Moscardini, Prosecco!

Paulette’s guests wrote, “I enjoyed everything we did. The Prosecco tour with the lunch at the agriturismo was one of my favorite days. The cooking class and the tour of the coffee bars and the Rialto market tour with Chef Marika was also one of my favorite days. I would return to Venice with Chef Paulette in a heartbeat.”
Can you imagine arriving in France with two empty suitcases? And the airline didn’t lose any contents, as you might suspect. Karen Mitcham-Stoeckley has been leading tours for five years, but this was a first. Turns out that a couple was determined to take home the limit of wine plus many other items from Provence. “These dedicated shoppers ended up asking if I had any soft clothing items they could borrow for cushioning the wine, returning the clothing to me back home,” related Karen.

“Each spring I offer three tours, receiving two people at a time at my house in Les Arcs sur Argens, France, for a week of ‘Cooking in Provence.’ It’s a very old stone house in a medieval village in the Var region just west of Nice and north of St. Tropez. We tour from Nice to Aix en Provence on day trips, concentrating on many of the villages around Les Arcs. We also go to the Escoffier Museum, to St. Tropez, and the Ligurian Sea.

Karen has had lots of experience touring nearby villages, wineries, markets, and historical sites as she has been coming to Provence for 20 years. In St. Louis she owns a bakery, winery, and B&B where they serve breakfast and lunch. She’s also the author of the book, A Culinary Legacy: From Escoffier to Today, from which she uses recipes for the five cooking classes of traditional Provençal dishes included in her tour.

In addition to the class-prepared meals, Karen also takes the two people out for two dinners: to a very rustic bistro and one very haute cuisine in the restaurant of her book co-author. She customizes the week to the taste and interest of the guests. Prior to arrival, they can select many destinations and some of the menus they want to cook. The dishes are mostly Provençal recipes, seafood, and local cheese and wines. Next year, Karen is planning on accommodating four to six guests in a different house.
Arlene Sailhac (New York)  
France, Spain, Portugal, Turkey, Italy, Austria  
www.Foodophiles.com

Former owner and founder of the 36-year old De Gustibus Cooking School at Macy’s, Arlene Sailhac had also done specific food and wine travels during those years and subsequently became owner/director of Food o Philes specializing in culinary tourism. “I am comfortable in knowing my clients wants and needs, so I try to organize specific wine, food, and cultural destinations that I feel would be of interest to them,” she said. Arlene has been leading groups of about 22 people on culinary tours for 13 years, once or twice yearly. Of the challenges, she said, “You just have to hope there are no outside circumstances intervening and that you have carefully planned all the specific day to day details. I use destination managers in each of the places to visit, and they arrange the local travel under my guidance.

The most unusual happening was with Chef Cesare Casella in Lucca, Italy, his home town. We started the tour with about 22 people. The next day, he said his aunt, uncle, and mother would join us on the bus. The following day, he added the cousins and neighbors. By the night of the final party, we had the entire population of Lucca celebrating with us. It was a great time!”

Another time, Arlene had met the Turkish Consul prior to a trip to Turkey. She mentioned she liked to do very personal things for her guests. He said there was an ambassador who loved to entertain Americans. Consequently they organized a dinner with the 25 people on Arlene’s tour matched with 25 Turkish people of similar occupations. “We had a long table along the Bosphorus, which was incredibly special. Dana, you are such an affirming presence. You make schedules and agendas, and always keep your cool amazes me. and, everyone you are with feel special. That makes you really special!!”

Dana Reinhardt  
(British Columbia)  
Italy: Lazio and Tuscania  
www.sol-kitchen.net

Having owned four restaurants with an emphasis on Italian food and as a professional chef with an extensive background in Italian food, Dana Reinhardt is a natural to lead culinary tours to Italy.

Dana does extensive “on-the-ground” research for all of her tours. “My ideas come from my own travels and experiences within the region,” she said. “I thoroughly vet every restaurant and excursion myself.”

“I concentrate my tours in the northern area of the province of Lazio and the ancient walled city of Tuscania,” explains Dana. “We cook every day in the kitchens at Casa Copanetti—five minutes from Tuscania. This highly rated agriturismo is a bio-dynamic, organic olive-oil farm with gardens, cows, pigs and chickens. We cook with ingredients from the farm for all the classes and all the meals provided.”

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Dana’s third year leading tours to Italy—two per year. “I offer one in May and one in September. This gives the eight to 10 people on the tour two different seasonal culinary palettes to cook with, both quite different in their offerings. It’s very ‘hands on.’ Everyone chops, kneads, rolls pasta, and fires pizzas into the wood oven.”

“The great thing about the intimate size of my group,” Dana continues, “is the friendships that have developed between the participants. In fact, I am going to dinner where all the participants and their spouses from my September 2015 tour, are going to recreate a number of the dishes I taught them on the trip.”

“The food of Lazio is made up of simple dishes based on fresh ingredients. The sauces that adorn the pasta dishes go from simple, like cacio e pepe (salty Roman pecorino and pepper) to elaborate recipes including butter, egg, pancetta or guanciale (cured pork cheek). The traditional pasta sauce from Amatrice, called Amatriciana, is made by sautéing onions in pork fat, adding tomatoes and spices,
Les Dames d’Escoffier International

Kathy Denis (Kansas City)
Bordeaux, France
www.globalculinaryescapades.com
Publisher of the Restaurant Guide of Kansas City, Kathy Denis, a French government certified tour guide in the Bordeaux area in the 1990s, decided to lead yearly culinary tours three years ago. Her husband is from France, and after their marriage, they moved to Kansas City and started publishing the restaurant guide.
“We had always given advice on travelling to France and helped people plan their vacations. While on a family trip to France in 2012, we decided to ‘officially’ share our knowledge, experience, and personal contacts in France by launching a sister-business called Global Culinary Escapades,” explained Kathy.

The main area they focus on is the city of Bordeaux, its surrounding vineyards including the town of St. Emilion, and the Dordogne Valley, including the medieval town of Sarlat. Kathy Pelz (Kansas City) and two former Dames have been among the 15 travelers on each tour.
“We have personally known for years many of the artisans and restaurants that we visit, so the biggest challenge in planning tours is narrowing down the places where we can actually take people on the tours because of time constraints. There are so many fantastic artisans passionate about what they do and amazing places to visit with such rich history that we could easily spend a lot more time in each area,” said Kathy.
Unusual things sometimes happen during tours. Kathy relates, “We were having dinner in a private room of a castle that had a fire lit in the fireplace, large candelabras

Valentina Harris (London)
Italy and France
www.cucinavalentina.co.uk

“Of all the things I do, (writing, TV, journalism, consulting, catering, teaching adults and children, and producing food shows) I love nothing more than taking groups on tours,” confides Valentina Harris (center of top photo and in above photo). “It is a magical thing, and the best and most honest way to get to know a place is through your taste-buds.”

“On my tours, I try to make sure people go home not only well fed, but also with a deeper understanding of the place they have been. I know Italy inside out and love nothing more than taking a group of interested people along with me on a culinary adventure. Getting a group together used to be relatively easy, but these days, there is so much competition—mostly for poor travesties of what I consider to be a real food and wine tour, it is hard to keep the magic going!”

Valentina has been working her magic since the 1980s—originally 20 tours per year but now one or two for between eight and 20 people. Being mostly Italian, an internationally recognized expert in Italian food and wine, author of 45 published books, and a qualified cookery teacher, Valentina also speaks fluent Italian and French.

Among the lucky travelers on her tours, one wrote, “I must say how much I enjoyed my stay with you and have no hesitation in recommending your tours to friends and family. I do hope your venture continues to inspire and the Tavernelle [Ed. note: a small village in the hills of the Lunigiana, Italy] magic lives on.”

Ideas for future explorations came from Valentina’s friends and family who reside in Italy and France, “There is so much to explore!” she said. “Always new thrills and flavours to find; producers to meet; and experiences to be had.”

Some Dames have gone on Valentina’s tours and enjoyed foods typical of the region such as fresh, handmade pasta; traditionally prepared Parma ham in the Langhirano Valley; and its partner in food, Parmigiano Reggiano—famous for its balsamic vinegar, prosciutto, and cheese.
In conjunction with Edible London May 13-16, Valentina has planned a two-day extension to Welbeck Estate, one of England’s most beautiful stately homes. Her exclusive tour will take you to Welbeck Abbey, in the heart of Sherwood Forest in North Nottinghamshire. For more information, go to www.lesdameslondon.org.
and candles everywhere, and it was thundering and lightening. When the server left the room, we decided that the atmosphere was more authentic without the electric lights from the chandelier so we turned them off! She was surprised upon returning and thought there was a problem with the electricity. We convinced her that we were perfectly fine without the electric lights on and finished our meal in a completely medieval atmosphere. Also, I ran into French movie star Franck Dubosc when we were visiting Sarlat’s Saturday market and got my picture taken with him.

Foods typical of the region where Kathy takes her tours are oysters, foie gras, confit de canard, red wine, canele (small dessert cakes from Bordeaux), black truffles (from Perigord), and cépe mushrooms.

Pleased guests wrote, “We saw and did so much that the trip now seems magical.” “Wow — beyond my expectations with a surprise around every corner.” “Fabulous trip of a lifetime.”

Hiroko uses a Japanese travel agent to book the hotels and restaurants. “I always visit and do research on hotels, restaurants and places of activities. I also have many friends who are in the food and culture business there. What I find challenging is assembling a group in which each attendee has the same passion and common sense as I do,” she said. Kaiseki meal, ramen, sushi, and charcoal grilled seafood are some of the foods typical of the regions where Hiroko takes her tours.

A touring member comments, “The culinary tour of Japan was fantastic…a great balance of touring, visiting markets and a cultural immersion, and, of course, eating. Every meal had a learning component and built on what we had learned before. I feel I now have a much greater appreciation for Japanese cuisine and preparation. High points included the live tuna auction and market [Note: now closed to the public]; the sushi immediately following; the cooking class; the visit to the Buddhist temple with a little meditation and wonderful lunch; the visits to all the different markets; the various Japanese gardens; the sake distillery, the sake….so many memories, so many experiences and a terrific collection of wonderful people!”

In 2016, her tour travels to Hokkaido, Lake Toya, Noboribetsu City, Furano City, Lake Akan, Shiretoko National Park, and Wakkani. There is one place left for this tour. If interested, please email hiroko@hirokoskitchen.com.

Joanne Weir
(San Francisco)
Morocco, Spain, France,
Italy, and Greece
www.joanneweir.com/international-culinary-journeys

Having penned 15 books about the food of the Mediterranean and having traveled extensively in the countries that surround the Mediterranean for the last 30 years, in 2016 Joanne Weir is celebrating her 20th anniversary leading culinary tours. Joanne does many things in her career but by far, Culinary Journeys are her favorite. Spending a week cooking and traveling together, she’s met many students who have ended up being great friends. She’s shared weeks with honeymooners, CEO’s of major companies, and students falling in love with locals. One time “a female guest fell madly in love with my Italian assistant and ended up in the walk-in refrigerator with him,” related Joanne. “As she came back out of the walk-in, we were all standing there, and her lipstick was smeared all over her mouth! They keep me entertained!” she said.

She does extensive research for a couple of years to find the right locations and accommodations—usually gorgeous villas in Italy, Spanish haciendas or maison d’hotes (B&Bs) in France. The accommodation has to be up to American 4 to 5-star standards with bedrooms and each with its own en suite bathrooms. They also have to provide a large kitchen, preferably commercial, for hands-on cooking classes.

“I travel to these particular locations multiple times beforehand as my trips include dinners in private villas, special winery visits and al fresco lunches not accessible to the general public. We’ve enjoy Prosecco and antipasti in a villa along the Grand Canal in Venice; made a huge pot of Amarone risotto al fresco at a film director’s villa in the Veneto; made bread with Berber women in the Atlas Mountains outside Marrakech; and had a celebration party at the conclusion of a week in Provence complete with Parisian musicians playing gypsy music,” said Joanne.

“In Marrakech, Morocco, we make tagines, couscous and bisteeya. In Rioja and Seville, Spain, we do all kinds of tapas, paella and fideos. In Provence, France my groups learn to make brandade, galettes, soufflé, bouillabaisse, bouillade, and soupe au pistou. In Italy, depending upon the region, we make polenta, homemade ravoli, and agnolotti. We cook porcini when they’re in season and shave white truffles onto pasta in the Piedmonte,” she elaborated. “On the island of Kea in Greece we pick grape leaves and make dolmas, taste some delicious local cheeses, and all kinds of mezze. All of my classes are seasonal foods of the region, with a strong wine component in every one.”

Joanne’s assistant, Karen, is “fantastic and very thorough, which is what you need to be able to do this kind of work because it takes hard work, love of people and patience. Thank God, I have all three and love what I do!” she enthuses.
Guida Ponte (Boston)
Sao Miguel Island, Azores (Portugal)
www.azoresfoodtour.com

The Azores—a nine-island group in the Atlantic 740 miles west of Portugal, are near and dear to Guida Ponte’s heart. Born and raised on Sao Miguel (the largest island), she knows practically every inch of it and just about every resident, many of whom are relatives and lifelong friends.

For 10 years, Guida has taken up to eight people on tours there; in 2016, she will lead four tours. Flying to the Azores can be a challenge. SATA does not fly there every day, they book up fast, and prices vary. Boston Dames Isabelle Chesak and Ann Hopkins have taken Guida’s tour, and her director of communications is Jennifer Wolcott.

Her love for cooking simply and with fresh, local, and seasonal ingredients, especially seafood, was first sparked as a child growing up on Sao Miguel. Guida cooked for 18 years at Legal Seafoods, owned her own restaurant (Guida’s Coastal Cuisine in Concord, Massachusetts), and now cooks at much-loved Jennifer Verrill’s Verrill Farm in Concord. Guida is one of 25 American chefs chosen by First Lady Michelle Obama to join her “Chefs Move to Schools” campaign.

Every time Guida travels to the island, she visits new hotels and restaurants. Also, her on-site tour guides—her brother, Manuel, and friend, Sandra, also constantly research new sites, hikes, cafes, and more. Last year, Guida doggedly led a group while walking on crutches with a broken ankle!

“There’s so much to do on the spectacular ‘Green Island’ of Sao Miguel that we stay there the entire time,” said Guida. “We explore the vibrant capital city of Ponta Delgada, the more laid-back village of Ribera Grande, the island’s oldest town (Vila Franca do Campo), and ‘the legendary town of Furnas, home to volcanic craters and geo-thermal lakes and natural ‘hot tubs.’”

Jennifer wrote, “Guida’s brother decided he needed a way to corral us at every sightseeing stop. We would become so enamored of the island’s stunning beauty, we forgot about time. But then we’d hear Manuel’s cowbell calling us back to the van. On our last day, he gave each guest a cowbell to take home.”

In addition to “the freshest seafood you can imagine. It practically jumps off the counter at the market,” Guida tells of these two regional dishes of the Azores:

- *Cocida das Furnas*: the island’s signature “boiled dinner” is a dish slow-cooked in the earth for five hours containing beef, pork, chicken, blood sausage, potatoes, carrots, cabbage, collard greens, and yams.
- *Cataplana* served in a large, round copper pot — a seafood stew with shrimp, chorizo, clams, a delicate whitefish, potatoes and onions in a savory broth.

Pam Williams
(British Columbia)
France, Belgium, Italy, Switzerland, Vancouver, Costa Rica, Ecuador

Touring for chocolate: what could be more heavenly? Pam Williams (top left), chocolatier extraordinaire, has been leading eight yearly chocolate training tours to many countries for 12 years. “When it comes to chocolate, each region has a different chocolate culture. For France, it’s dark chocolate and ganache; in Italy it’s *Gianduja*. Belgium is less dark, but that is changing. Switzerland is steeped in traditional chocolate, and Vancouver is new and modern chocolate,” elaborates Pam.

Her company, Ecole Chocolat, takes care of all program logistics and works with Valrhona, Callebaut, ICAM, and Felchlin chocolate companies. “We are always looking for the best experiences and learning opportunities for the seven to 12 participants on the tour plus one to three traveling companions, so we keep up to date on the newest in chocolate in each country. We work with our partners to provide training that is an intensive experience in using professional equipment, techniques, and advanced recipes for production of fine quality artisan bonbons, confections, and bars,” said Pam.

A participant commented, “This France program gave me an extraordinary experience and different perspectives in chocolate. After this journey I have a greater extent of the knowledge and the professional skills. Many thanks to Pam and Rachel for their kindness and patience during this program.”

As with any food program, dealing with the participants’ dietary restrictions is a challenge. “Europeans don’t understand this very North American way of approaching food,” said Pam, “so I always tell those with restrictions to bring their own prepared food as they may not find much to eat in the smaller towns where we spend most of our time.”

Pam is the owner of Ecole Chocolat and author of *Raising the Bar: The Future of Fine Chocolate*. The cities where Pam’s company holds its chocolate programs are:

- Belgium - Brussels, Antwerp, Aalst
- France - Paris, Tain l’Hermitage
- Italy - Milan, Turin, Lecce
- Canada - Vancouver
- Switzerland - Zurich, Schwyz
- Ecuador - Quito, Mindo
- Costa Rica - San Jose, Puerto Viejo and others
Rachel Gaffney (Dallas)
Ireland
www.rachelgaffneys.com

Born and raised in Cork, Ireland, Rachel Gaffney is a columnist for Georgina Campbell's Ireland, the country's leading travel guide. For three years, she has led tours to Ireland, including the wild Atlantic Coast, Clare, Mayo, and Sligo plus Cavan, Dublin and Louth.

On her latest culinary tour, "We went foraging for seaweed in County Sligo with Dr. Prannie Rhatigan (in red jacket), author of The Irish Seaweed Kitchen; learned how to cook with it; and had a picnic on the beach," said Rachel. "We also learned about the ancient tradition of Irish smoked salmon in County Clare. The group had cooking classes with Ireland's leading TV chef, Neven Maguire (with Rachel in bottom photo), in County Cavan."

Other activities include sampling local cheeses, visiting farms to learn about sustainable farming, eating at gastro pubs, and meeting the locals. The group stays in castles and guesthouses and learns about Bronze Age cooking sites. "We also tour gardens," added Rachel, "and last year we toured the Historic Victorian Gardens at Kylemore Abbey in County Mayo."

In the process of composing tours, Rachel researches and visits every site. "If I won't stay there, then I'm not putting you there," she said. "I visit Ireland numerous times a year and venture out on my own discovering all the people and places off the beaten path. The people are my inspiration. I listen to their stories, document them, and research further when I return home to Dallas."

One example was when Rachel was in Ennistymon, County Clare, in 2014, and met Dr. Brendan Dunford, whose Ph.D. research project was The Impact of Agricultural Practices on the Natural Heritage of the Burren. It highlighted the important role that farming plays in supporting the rich biodiversity and cultural heritage of the Burren and also the worrying breakdown in traditional farming systems and the habitats dependent on them. After meeting Brendan, she took her group there the next year.

"An international trip has to be planned months in advance with careful attention to detail, but I love doing it," said Rachel. Sometimes there are unusual happenings for the eight to 12 people on the tour. "Last April, we were staying in County Cavan and the Irish Prime Minister was having dinner in the same dining room," reported Rachel.

"We have a wonderful time and the locals love meeting the groups. I especially love showing people the Ireland I know: my real Ireland."

SPRING QUARTERLY 2016

Iliana de la Vega (Austin)
Mexico
iliandelavega@gmail.com

“My family is rooted in Oaxaca. I lived in the city and owned a restaurant there for over a decade, so I have in-depth knowledge of it,” said Iliana de la Vega. “I have been a chef and instructor of Mexican food for over 20 years. And I’ve been taking people on custom-trips to Mexico for around 8 years—private tours with chefs and food companies, but it wasn’t until last year that I decided to do tours for the general public.”

Given that her tours focus on placing the food of the city within its cultural context to understand the elements that make it so unique, Iliana’s background gives her the necessary tools to show people the roots and culinary traditions of the cities they visit. Her plan is to do a tour every 2 or 3 months for eight to 12 people, beginning with Oaxaca and branching out to Mexico City, Puebla and Mérida. Iliana and her daughter, Isabel, are in charge of arranging everything: hotel and restaurant reservations, arranging transportation and activities, etc. but not the plane tickets.

“When deciding where I want to take people, I try to find those unique elements that will, combined, give the person a good, comprehensive idea of what the city is. We visit all important landmarks, from ruins to important churches and convents, and we look at tradition for inspiration, visiting old markets and smaller surrounding towns to find local crafts. Since the tours focus on food, I try to give people a realistic and true experience of what the people eat, from street stands and market food to high-end restaurants,” explains Iliana.

“Oaxaca is known for the various mole sauces, and we try to give the people in our tours a good idea of what these are. There is also traditional hot chocolate, quesadillas with hand-made tortillas, and the local cheese, quesillo. Besides trying dishes, we like to introduce people to the ingredients unique to the city, so they can understand them in the context of the final product. Chef Gabriel Ibarra, formerly of Cappy’s in San Antonio, Texas, said, “I was privileged enough to go to Oaxaca with Iliana in January. WOW! One of the best trips and culinary experiences ever.”

Iliana at left in chef coat and right in top photo.
Carmella Fragassi, Chef Peppe Zullo.

Paolo's Pizzeria," revealed Carmella. Peppe Zullo introduces the guests to the foods of Puglia such as Buratta cheese, orecchiette, lambs, rabbit, olive oil, cheeses made from sheep's milk, wild boar, horse meat, fava beans, figs, and pomegranate. And let us not forget the Fiore di Zucchino a favorite throughout Italy.

“When I begin to put a tour together, I get a feel for what the guest wants to learn and see. For instance, one year I asked my wine representative—the owners of Tuscany Distributing, Raffaele Scettro and his wife Margaret Mann, to help create a tour of Raffaele’s home town of Rapallo in Liguria and to arrange tours of some of the wineries he represents in the states.

Along with this, the group had a cooking lesson at Un Gaiu with Fausto. Some of the foods typical of the region are Potato and French Bean Loaf, Pansotti (stuffed with greens) and walnut sauce, Genoese Pesto, Focaccia Formaggio, Farinata (a chick pea kind of pizza).”

After eight years of leading 14-person tours, Carmella said, “The biggest challenge is to make sure that the group has chemistry. Actually I pre-screen most of the guests. Who wants trouble? The trip should be enjoyable and stress free for all.”

➤ Connie Walsh (Boston)
Italy, France, England, Myanmar, Portugal, Spain, Turkey
www.forks-ontheroad.com

Connie Walsh has been in the travel industry for over 30 years, and for the past several her focus has been culinary travel. Connie describes the philosophy of her boutique-sized company, Forks on the Road, as discovering a destination’s history and culture through its cuisine.

She explained, “I design and operate small group tours, many of which I enjoy leading, and culinary themed individual travel. Our most requested destinations are Italy and France and my most exotic destination was Myanmar. The group loved it!”

“We’ve had many interesting experiences. In London we visited the rooftop of St. Ermins Hotel to learn about urban beekeeping—and tasted the honey. Fascinating and delicious! Tours of organic farms and seeing the pigs in situ is always fun and generates some amusing reactions.”

Connie does a lot of research and vetting of sites and restaurants, visiting personally if at all possible. She sets up international calls via Skype with chefs and other culinary vendors for face-time communication.

“I follow travel industry and culinary trends as what are the ‘hot’ destinations—then drill down to identify the top culinary people there. I attend industry trade shows and events and meet with people when they come to Boston. Making sure that the experiences are authentic—not touristy—is a challenge,” confesses Connie. “Ensuring that vegetarians and those with food allergies are accommodated is another. Because group tours are often planned a year or more in advance, restaurants may change chefs, altering what was expected.”

➤ Patricia Ravenscroft
France, Italy, Morocco, Vietnam, Turkey, & India
www.deliciousconnections.com

This much-traveled Dame has led a total of 84 trips in the past 22 since beginning her business “Delicious Connections,” in 1994.

Patricia Ravenscroft researches and plans every detail of every trip herself (from two to six per year) and collects new ideas from other people and printed materials.

“I can customize any trip for...”
private groups. My tours are small and intimate—only 6 to 8 people,” explains Patti, “and range from ages 20 to 80. The foods we cook are those special to the regions, for example: truffles and foie gras in the Dordogne; handmade pastas in Italy; and tagines in Morocco. Beverly Brocksch Shaud (Washington, D.C.) has been on several of my trips, and Donna Hesick (Chicago), came on my “Truffle and Foie Gras” trip to the Dordogne last winter. Donna loved the trip so much that she is going to bring a group of her clients on the same trip in 2017.

Donna wrote in Patti’s guestbook, “The best of this trip—getting to know you, was even better than the amazing food and wine, great itinerary and awesome people. Your enthusiasm for all things French and your knowledge of the cuisine and the country have been motivational.” Donna’s 22-year old niece, wrote, “You are truly an amazing person and have made this trip beyond incredible. Thank you so much for the greatest experience I have had so far in my life!”

Because Patti now lives in Paris, she has an office manager in Washington, Judith Raak, who handles all the bookings. Before starting her business, “I was a mental health professional,” said Patti, “and I am very good with groups. But what makes my trips work, I think, is that I love people and love sharing my passion for food, wine, history, and culture with similarly minded people. For me, there are no challenges in arranging tours. The challenge is attracting new travellers.”

Many fun and sometimes funny things happen in the restaurant kitchens where Patti’s groups cook because she takes people behind the scenes in restaurant kitchens with top chefs who have never taught to the non professionals. “I remember Michelin 2-star Chef Patrick Jeffroy in Brittany teaching us to make crepes and then letting us flip them all around his kitchen to the shock of the staff!”

Gina Stipo (Kentucky)

Italy

www.eccolacucina.com

Originally moving to Siena, Tuscany, to work as executive chef on an estate, Gina Stipo began leading tours 15 years ago to that region of Italy. She built up a business doing cooking classes and tours. “At one time, my classes and tours were listed at #2 on Trip Advisor of ‘Things to do in Siena!’” revealed Gina.

She began with two to four people, showing them the wonderful local food scene she was learning herself. Her sister, Mary Potter, became Gina’s partner in 2005 and handles all the bookings from Dallas.

Formerly, Gina offered six tours a year, but since she moved to Louisville, Kentucky, she cut back to four. That’s because she now owns and operates a small osteria called At the Italian Table, which keeps her busy.

Gina makes a great tour leader. She speaks fluent Italian, and her expertise in Italian cuisine, wine, history, and culture comes from a lifetime of living and traveling through Italy. “I first lived in Verona when I was six. I grew up in an Italian-American family, and as an adult, I studied culinary arts in Bologna, traveled extensively and finally went to live there in 2000.”

“We began by offering only Tuscany,” said Gina, “since that was where I lived. Then we branched out to other regions: Campania/Naples, Piedmont, and Emilia Romagna/Bologna. In each area, I strive to show our guests the authentic Italy behind the tourist spots. I speak the language and am able to introduce our guests to locals making and growing the food. We visit major cities like Siena, Florence, Naples, Bologna, and Parma, but also smaller towns that are off the beaten track.”

Connie feels that culinary tours are best experienced in smaller groups (15-18), which allow for more opportunities for hands-on cooking lessons and a better more intimate experience on activities like culinary walking tours, market visits, tastings, and tutorials.

Some of the foods typical of the regions where Connie plans and leads tours are: Emilia Romagna - prosciutto di Parma, aceto balsamico, parmigiano-reggiano; Cotswolds, England – cheeses, especially Stilton, paired with ales; Provence – tapenade, bonilabaisse.
Carrie McDougall (Boston)
Every Continent
www.culturalcrossroads.com

Her tours, Cultural Crossroads, have been honored four times by Condé Nast Traveler Magazine’s “Trips of a Lifetime” and five times by National Geographic Traveler Magazine’s “Tours of a Lifetime.” But Carrie McDougall’s 10-year old tour business had younger beginnings.

“I began traveling overseas at 10 years old; was an exchange student in Mexico at 15, France at 17; and lived and worked in India and Nepal setting up programs in schools for the Canadian Government when I was 22. I also studied to be a Travel Agent, worked in the hotel and airline business (got certified in food and beverage and Hotel Management), led tours for Elderhostel’s (now Road Scholar) Scandinavian Seminar, and led 14 Harvard Alumni Trips. I earned my Masters degree in Intercultural Relations/International Studies at Lesley University in Cambridge, Massachusetts,” said Carrie.

Many of Carrie’s group tours have culinary aspects (such as classes, demonstrations, and wine tastings and pairings). One of her challenges is engaging chefs who are great at working with people. Another is making sure everyone is happy, as some come only to watch and not to cook.

A Massachusetts couple wrote, “We recently vacationed with Cultural Crossroads to the Cinque Terre area of Italy. The experience changed our ideas about tours. This was well organized and extremely well run. It was a culinary and wine tour and had pre-arranged meals and wines. Needless to say the dining experiences were over the top.” On that tour, guests enjoyed Caciucco alla Livornese Lardo, Scampi alla Gemelli, Zuppa di Farro, and Testaroli.

Carrie gets ideas from having visited all seven continents and over 75 countries, many over and over again with her tours. But she always works with local people to provide the best service, drivers, and guides. Said Carrie, “I do a number of tours for Public Media, non-profits, businesses and some for the general public, as well as private requests from individuals, couples, family, friends, and multi-generations. I find the ideal size group to be 8 to 16 people.”
Green Tables meets Global Culinary Initiative in Seattle

BY ANN STRATTE
(WASHINGTON, D.C.)

Seattle has a time-tested food scene that combines the cosmopolitan appeal of a large city with the green movement of the West Coast. As a coastal city with influences from Asia and Mexico and a penchant for fusion, the sky’s the limit for what you can find here. Or to put it in LDEI terms, Green Tables meets Global Culinary Initiative. What a perfect location for the 2018 annual conference!

Your 2016 LDEI Board convened in this fantastic haven of culinary treasures, exquisite local wines, tasty craft beers, and the iconic Space Needle for their first face-to-face meeting of the year at the Marriott Waterfront. President Maria Gomez kept the board on task to accomplish her aggressive agenda and the business of the organization.

Using the strategic plan developed at our June 2015 meeting in Minneapolis, the board identified three key focus areas: (1.) advancing the LDEI brand; (2.) the Brock Circle; and (3.) conference funding.

(1.) Hayley Mathes-Mattson, Judy Bellos, and Bev Schaffer formed a working group to come up with ideas for our number one priority, Les Dames d’ Escoffier’s brand awareness. Celebrating the Escoffier name and LDEI’s 30th anniversary are two themes that will be explored by this committee as vehicles to increase recognition of LDEI abroad.

(2.) As the Brock Circle matures, short and long term plans must be put in place to manage and utilize these funds. Lori Willis, Deborah Mintcheff, and Kathy Gold volunteered to review the past and make plans for future use of the funds, identifying strategic needs and conference enhancements.

(3.) In order to maintain the high quality of our annual conference, Deb Orrill, Stacy Ziegler, and Ann Stratte will work to evaluate our current conference budget model. As conference costs vary from city to city, the committee will work on a plan that will accommodate these fluctuations.

2016 Conference Co-chairs, Drew Faulkner and Kari Barrett telephoned into the meeting on Saturday morning with plans for the October Washington, D.C., conference. Board members were duly impressed with the committee’s work. A lengthy discussion ensued regarding the Friday night event, which will be a celebration of LDEI’s 30th birthday—a very special event!

Other subjects discussed include new-chapter mentoring, conference partnerships, webinars, the Quarterly, affiliation agreements, insurance, and fundraising. President Gomez gave a comprehensive review of the site visits for the 2018 LDEI conference in Seattle.

This was a productive meeting with each board member leaving with a long “to-do” list. However, the highlight of our meeting was dinner with Seattle Dames. Many thanks to our host and chef/owner Lisa Nakamura of Gnocchi Bar! Joining us were Bev Gruber, Alice Gauth Foreman, Martha Marino, Alison Leber, Sheri Wetherell, Jerilyn Brusseau, and Kirsten Robinett. From the Prosecco Pear Fizz aperitif to the Pavlova for dessert, everything was fantastic. More Seattle fun to come in 2018!
MEET THE 2016 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

FIRST VICE PRESIDENT
STACY ZEIGLER
A Michigan girl by birth and a Florida girl for adolescence, Stacy Zeigler settled in Atlanta after graduating from the University of Miami. It wasn’t until she moved to Atlanta and started working at The Ritz-Carlton, that she discovered her passion for great food and travel. After eleven years with the Ritz-Carlton, working her way up from catering assistant to Director of Catering and Conference Services, she set her sights on off premise catering. Stacy is currently the Director of Sales at Bold American Events, overseeing the catering, design and group dining sales teams. She won the companies “Soul of the Family” award in 2011 and doubled the catering revenues from $5M to $10M in the course of 10 years. She also served 5 years on the National Board of NACE (National Association of Catering Executives). To offset her love of eating and all things chocolate, she practices yoga and plays tennis.

SECOND VICE PRESIDENT
ANN STRATTE
Thank you for the opportunity to serve my fourth term on the LDEI board. A charter member of the Atlanta Chapter of Les Dames d’Escoffier, I transferred my membership to the Washington, D.C., Chapter in 2000 and currently serve as chapter president. I attended Carleton College and the University of Minnesota, and graduated from Le Cordon Bleu in Paris. I spent over twenty years in the corporate world, working in sales and marketing for large and small food companies. As a result, I became an expert in negotiating private-label contracts between manufacturers and grocery chains. Retiring from the corporate world allowed me to follow my dream of becoming a personal chef and caterer. Ann lives in Annapolis, Maryland, and Jamestown, R.I. with her husband, Bill, and two Cairn Terriers, Marge and Fargo.

THIRD VICE PRESIDENT
HAYLEY JO MATSON-MATHES
A consultant living in Honolulu, Hayley Matson-Mathes serves as the executive director of the Hawaii Culinary Education Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to culinary education and mentoring. She annually coordinates visiting chef programs for community college culinary programs and working chefs, and partners mentor/chefs with high school students. Hayley served in government and corporate culinary marketing positions, building a comprehensive background in culinary education, foodservice, and retail promotions. She served as a culinary media spokesperson and developed culinary marketing promotions with Harrod’s of London and Bloomingdale’s New York and Chicago. Hayley has been Hawaii Chapter President, LDEI Chapter Board Liaison, and as the IACP Marketing Communicators Chair. She has a Bachelor of Science degree from Kansas State University—where she was named Outstanding Young Professional, and a Master of Science in Communications from Fort Hays State University, both with honors. Hayley is an advocate for girls’ education programs. She continues to be active in her family’s Kansas farm and ranch operation. Hayley and husband Michael are avid gardeners, hikers, travelers and nature lovers.

SECRETARY
BEV SHAFFER
Bev is a founding member of the Cleveland/ Northeast Ohio LDEI Chapter, a Board member for the University of Akron’s Nutrition and Dietetics Program, an Ohio State Master Gardener, and a member of IACP Chefs Collaborative, ACF and WCR. She works full time as Corporate Chef and Manager of Recipe Development for Vitamix World HQ in Ohio; for Vitamix, Bev travels internationally, specializing in recipe development—having developed more than 15,000 recipes on a wide variety of subjects.
Born and raised a Jersey girl with an attitude and sense of humor to match, she has owned her own kitchen store and catering business, been a cooking school director and culinary instructor, has had her own award-winning cable TV show, has been a food columnist, travel and food writer, is the author of six cookbooks (with food photographer husband, John) and a frequent media guest on TV, radio, and in the press.
She is the recipient of numerous awards including international writing fellowships and Ohio Dietetic Association’s Outstanding Contribution Award, and feels privileged to serve on the LDEI International Board as current Secretary.

TREASURER
DEBORAH ORRILL
Deborah Orrill’s culinary conversion occurred while working in finance for Texas Instruments France in Villeneuve-Loubet, the birthplace of Auguste Escoffier. Quelcoincidence! Enchanted by
the markets, restaurants and French culture of food, Deborah eventually left TI to work at the École de Cuisine La Varenne in Paris. Afterwards she continued her passion for culinary education in roles with Anne Willan at La Varenne in Burgundy, Patricia Wells in Provence and Paris, Lorenza de Medici at Badia a Coltibuono in Tuscany, and Central Market Cooking School in Dallas. Furthering her mission, Deborah has been active in The American Institute of Wine & Food (serving two years as national chairman) and LDEI Dallas. Based in Dallas, Deborah enjoys summers on the coast of Maine where the culinary education continues: just how many ways can lobster be prepared?

CHAPTER BOARD LIAISONS

JUDITH BELLOS
Judith began her career in food and beverage management within the hotel industry where her love for all things food took hold. In 1981 she, along with her partner, founded Ces & Judy’s Catering, a privately held corporation, serving the St. Louis area in social and corporate catering, also specializing as a food service management company to large not-for-profit institutions in the St. Louis area. Judith’s passion has always been fine food and entertaining. She feels fortunate to have been able to build a successful career and business around that passion. Her favorite foods are mushrooms and anything seasoned with rosemary, thyme, garlic, or fennel. As a gardener since the age of 14, a founding and active member of the St. Louis Chapter, she found a way to satisfy her wish to connect with other talented women in her field and also be able to share her good works through philanthropy to her community. She says she found Julia Child and Marcella Hazan to be the women who helped fuel her love of fine cooking! She also tries to pay homage, often, to all those mentors who helped her hone her business skills all along the way.

KATHY GOLD
Kathy Gold is a member of the Philadelphia Chapter, where she served on the Board for eight years and is the Immediate Past President. Kathy is also a member of Women Chefs and Restaurateurs, where she held the position of Local Exchange Coordinator for many years. After a successful 20-year career as an investment professional, she followed her passion into the kitchen, taking formal training at Le Cordon Bleu. Kathy opened a catering and private chef services company and was a frequent guest chef at Williams-Sonoma and Sur La Table. In 2005, Kathy opened In the Kitchen Cooking School, an event space and hands-on cooking school in Haddonfield, New Jersey. In addition to public classes and corporate team building events, Kathy hosts The Wounded Warrior Project, and holds classes for people with autism.

DEBORAH MINTCHEFF
Deborah MIntCheff lives two of her passions every day: as a cookbook editor and a certified life coach. Her love of cookbook publishing was developed at the boutique book-packaging firm of Smallwood & Stewart in New York City. Formerly Deborah was a top food stylist, sought after for her exceptional baking skills and creativity. Her love of food styling evolved while working in magazine test kitchens, but her professional start began as a garde manger at Tavern on the Green. Five years ago, she got her life-coach certification through the Coaches Training Institute (CTI) and the International Coach Federation (ICF). Her diverse client roster includes the United Nations. She is a former president and co-president of the New York Chapter and has a Masters degree from New York University.

On LDEI

“There comes a time in your life, when you really think about where you want to give your time, talent, and treasure. It may change over the decades, but in my case, I continue to be drawn to LDEI, its mission, and vision, as well as the friendships I have shared over the years. Add to that, the opportunity that LDEI affords each member to be a part of an organization of substance and value that gives back to others.

“I smile thinking of LDEI’s early building years. I smile again at the current leadership group that is guiding us to new heights.

“The legendary slogan coined by the Leo Burnett Advertising Agency almost a half century ago says it all, ‘You’ve Come a Long Way, Baby!’ And we certainly have. Yet, there is more on the horizon for LDEI as we continue to move forward in our 30th anniversary year and beyond.”

—Alice Gautsch Foreman, Co-founder Seattle Chapter

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

LORI WILLIS
Lori Willis has built a 30-year career on the talent of establishing or improving the efficiency of communications operations for private, public, state, and non-profit entities. She is an award-winning writer, photographer, and video producer and has staged many large-scale meeting events. This fall, she left corporate life to form a communications consultancy that provides a myriad of services in support of individual clients or communications teams across a variety of industries, including food, beverage, and hospitality. She remains active, energized and excited about her work with Les Dames and serves clients who benefit from her growing culinary connections and expertise. Presently, Lori serves on the Executive Board of the United Way. In support of the organization’s “Feeding St. Louis” initiative, she is working to help provide creative and unique solutions to support those in the St. Louis community who work tirelessly on hunger relief, including St. Louis Dames. She is a founding member of the St. Louis Chapter. Lori is entering her fifth year of Board service and she is proud that her eight-year-old St. Louis Chapter has three members presently engaged in international leadership—either on the Board or international committees.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

GREG JEWELL
Executive Director Greg Jewell is in his 14th year as the Executive Director of LDEI. He started his company, AEC Management Resources, in 2000, after spending 13 years with another management company in Louisville. Today, his company’s client roster includes Foodservice Consultant Society International, American Institute of Wine and Food, North American Thermal Analysis Society, Kentucky Hotel and Lodging Association, Kentucky Society of Health System Pharmacists, and a half dozen more.
Ashley Hawkins

I've been in wine marketing communications for 11 years at Whole Foods Market's global headquarters, and it's been a passion of mine since day one. I'm always on the lookout for opportunities to expand my knowledge, and when a Dame at work forwarded the application, I applied.

I was thrilled to win a communications internship award with Chateau Ste. Michelle. Thank you to my amazing and inspiring and super-fun host, Kari Leitch, Vice President of Communications and Consumer Affairs at Chateau Ste. Michelle Winery, who tailored my week perfectly to everything I was hoping to learn—and I got to taste fabulous wine, and stay at a gorgeous location.

The experience opened my eyes to the types of jobs available in the industry and gave me great ideas to bring back to my team about how marketing and communications are structured in one segment of the wine industry that I was unfamiliar.

I'm still pinching myself that I was able to sit down to thoughtful conversations with leaders at Chateau Ste. Michelle in marketing, communications, education, and guest services. I heard about how teams are structured, strategy, and their ideation. I tasted samples of their portfolio with their master sommelier (and juice from the tanks with their winemakers—my first).

I came to understand from talking with the winemakers about how marketing plays a strong role in helping identify the types of wines they create. In particular, I loved my chat with Brett Scallon, Chateau Ste. Michelle's vice-president of marketing, who walked me through the soup to nuts branding of one particular wine label that will be coming out in the future. I learned about how his team spots trends, wine product innovation, and a new approach to stretching our team to look more widely and much further out.

I participated in a new wine label brainstorm and went on actual sales calls—both on and off premises—that helped me decide I want to stick with the communications side of beverage. I was also inspired by the mission-driven work they do with Women of the Vine, Women of Wine, and their scholarship fund. Huge appreciations to LDEI and The Julia Child Foundation for sponsoring the Legacy Awards. It was an incredible honor to win, and I am truly humbled to have been a part of this great educational experience.

Nicole Aloni and Cynthia Nims, my rock star tour guides, introduced me to a more delicious Seattle than I've ever tasted. Somehow, they squeezed into one day: two bakeries, two chocolate shops, a brewery, a distillery, a Spanish kitchen shop, and a spice shop. And, they wrapped it up with a fabulous dinner and more incredible Dames.

Katie Groffman

Soon after arriving at Wente Vineyards, I met with Karl Wente, fifth generation winemaker. When I asked him how I could make the most of my week's experience he said, “Focus on my intended end result and keep asking questions.” I had two goals: 1) to gain a better understanding of the process of making wine; and 2) to gain knowledge and insight on sustainable business.

Through the Wentes' guidance, I was able to gain insight on how a fifth generation business whose focus is on sustainability executes its mission. What that means in the vineyard and in the work place, how that translates into a brand, and how the company generates profits.

My first day at Wente I followed the grapes through the wine making process: picking, checking the “brix,” crush, fermentation, into barrels, and finally to bottle. Wente uses both science and creativity to produce its wines. The wines are constantly checked chemically, and then decisions are carried out based on results.

Wente's use of chemistry was more then I had previously experienced. It allows the winemakers concrete results that allows them to use creativity to guide the science. Giving them the ability to produce the best wine based on what the grape is actually doing.

Claude is the head winemaker at Wente Winery for the small lots. He graciously spent most of my first day teaching me about the winemaking process. I punched down and pumped the grapes into the fermentation tanks. I filled wine barrels, barrel tasted, and learned how wine tastes as it ferments and which flavors and aromas the barrels, yeast, and the different clones impart. This was my first time tasting like this, and as a sommelier, this was an extremely useful experience.

Over breakfast, Carolyn Wente and I discussed how to allow freeform ideas to flow, how to hold these ideas in your mind, turn them around, and let go of what does not fit. Sometimes it is easy to get caught up in freeform ideas and not make progress. And, sometimes a great business idea can evolve.

We talked about the importance of cultivating creativity, empowerment, and inspiration. That it is how you play the game that is important. I was enamored with what I saw: nurtured creativity based on accountable building blocks firmly rooted in the possibility of making a profit in a sustainable business.

My time at Wente was valuable and filled with growth. I was able to accomplish both of my intentions. Following the grapes through the wine making process was an extremely useful experience. And then, chatting about business with the many managers at Wente gave me insight into how Wentes run their business.

The contacts and experiences I had from my week at Wente will continue to help me grow.
As much as I enjoy teaching students culinary and pastry arts, I also love being a student. I applied for the LDEI Legacy Award to try meeting one of my 2015 goals—to go on an adventure that would change my life both professionally and personally. So, imagine my sheer joy when I received the call from Sue Robison that I had won the award for the Farm-to-Table experience with Wailea Agricultural Group on the Big Island of Hawaii.

I was so excited to learn more about Hawaiian agriculture. Before my trip I spent countless hours researching it and the import/export laws. I wanted to be sure I made my host, Lesley Hill, proud. I spent a week on her 133 acre farm, learning about growing and processing the Heart of Palm plant.

This trip of a lifetime was full of new experiences, sights, and tastes. We began with a brief tour of Hilo and Honomu. Arriving at the farm's driveway, I thought we were in Jurassic Park. I have never seen so much green—beautiful old trees climbing out of the side of the mountains, lush flora, and the beautiful coastline in the distance. After a farm tour, we had a home-cooked meal featuring heart of palm.

Day two began at 6 a.m. at the packing house. I met the farm workers and learned the process of taking and processing orders for heart of palm. Not a single plant was cut without an order for it—a true farm-to-table operation. The staff harvested the palm and cut it to order. My job was to build and pack the boxes for FedEx pick up. I was nervous to be working with such a perishable and expensive product. My goal was to take pictures of each step of the process, but I was so busy avoiding mistakes, I forgot.

On the fourth day, I rode with the farmers to see how they cut the palm trees. Wow, what an experience! The trees, once cut, will grow a new palm shoot, making it a sustainable (regrowth) plant. Riding the Gator tractor around the farm, I saw plants and fruits such as bananas, mangosteen, lilikoi passion fruit, ulu, avocados, coffee, vanilla, lychee, rambutan, acai, cloves, bay leaf, and Meyer lemons. I tasted and cooked with everything in season picked from the farm.

Lesley's passion and commitment to the local Hawaiian food system has encouraged me to make a stronger connection to my local food system and to help my students understand it. Her dedication to her business and to hospitality made me understand and feel the Aloha Spirit. Words cannot express my profound appreciation to Lesley, LDEI, and the Legacy Awards committee. The warmth and generosity shown to me at the annual conference by Dames and other Legacy Award winners and hosts made this whole experience one that I will treasure forever. I appreciate and respect the LDEI commitment to continued education and to the support of women in the hospitality, food and beverage industry. Thank you again for a wonderful, life-changing opportunity.

From meeting farmers to consumer sales, my week in Los Angles showed me some behind-the-scenes footage of the produce world. I arrived on a late Sunday night in July where I was met by my host Nancy Eisman. Nancy made arrangements for me to stay with her for the duration of my week-long visit. We quickly introduced ourselves, and we began our week-long voyage early the next morning.

My journey began at a berry farm where I was greeted by the farmers and some delicious berries. Picking berries is a physically demanding job, but there is much more to it than that. Properly caring for your land in addition to following all local and federal regulations can be just as exhausting. Waking up early is never my idea of a good time; however, those are the operating hours of the Wholesale Distribution Market. A Melissa's representative does that early start every day to see what's new and trendy as well as to coordinate special orders for clients.

Santa Monica Farmers Market: What can I say but WOW! Chef Miki Hackney escorted me through the market, which was great because she is very knowledgeable about different produce and their uses. A client of Melissa's is Dodgers Stadium—one of the first sports venues to focus on better food options during events, and what better way than utilizing great produce supplied by Melissa's? I had the pleasure of meeting with the very busy venue chef who took time to show me around the large foodservice operation. We were also able to sit baseline and watch the Los Angeles Dodgers win the baseball game.

My next day was spent touring local grocery stores and learning the sales and vision of the product. The way product is displayed promotes sales. I am very critical when I go to a store that doesn't have strong standards. My last day was spent with many great women of Melissa's where I was able to use fresh produce and Melissa's test kitchen to bring the West some Southern flair.

Aside from planning a great itinerary, Nancy Eisman and Ida Rodriguez arranged many lunches and dinners with local Dames. While learning the farm-to-table process, I was also fortunate to have spent time with many successful Dames. In a single week, I learned so much more than I could have ever imagined! Again, I cannot thank the Legacy Awards enough for such a great program that allows women like me to continue to thrive in this industry.
Van Doren Chan

On my first visit to Washington, I was amazed by the abundance of restaurants and the city's sophisticated hospitality scene. Restaurant Nora is the first certified organic restaurant in America—started in the 1980's when it was even more difficult to source organic produce than it is today.

During my Legacy week, I observed my host, the ambitious Nora Pouillon, lead her culinary team through many challenges. One executive chef, two sous chefs, and over 15 cooks execute seamless services. Most have been with her over 20 years, and they treat each other like family.

A full-time purchaser finds the best local organic ingredients for the restaurant from over 200 local producers and distributors. Every purchase has to be precise, be mindful of storage and food cost. We in the industry know how hard it can be to maintain a healthy margin for a conventional restaurant. It is much tougher for a certified-organic restaurant. Nora finds ways to keep the food cost at a manageable percentage so menu prices aren't too expensive.

At Nora, the menu changes daily to ensure the freshest ingredients. Every morning, Nora checks on the daily delivery; twice a week she purchases fresh ingredients at farmers markets. Working closely with the executive chef, they create the daily menu along with the culinary team. Dishes vary from Asian influenced Pad Thai served in roasted squash to grilled American grass-fed steak.

By noon the culinary team starts dinner prep. At 4 p.m. the staff gathers at one big table for family meal. I sat in on this and listened while the chef presented the day's menu and discussed wine pairing with the floor manager and service staff. Once the clock hits 5:30 p.m., the culinary team is back in their stations, and service begins.

Christine Burns Rudalevige

A few years back, I received an email from a friend whose email signature included a quote that read: “There is a special place in hell for women who don’t help other women.”

Since reading it, I’ve gravitated toward women who espouse the kind of personal and professional generosity not found in that particular corner of hell. So in a roundabout way, that quote led me to the LDEI Legacy award.

Of my 25 years in journalism, the recent six are exclusively about food. At every turn, there has been a Dame to help me. Virginia Willis (Atlanta) gave me insight on how to rock and roll the freelance food writing circuit. Cathy Barrow (Washington, D.C.) gave me the opportunity to test recipes for her award-winning cookbook. Nancy Matheson-Burns (Northeast) saved my bacon when she located geese for a Christmas table styling. I worked, stayed, and played with New York Dames for my legacy week in late September.

Hosts Susan Westmoreland and Sharon Franke at Good Housekeeping and Jan Hazard (who opened her home to me), tailored my experience to suit my needs. They knew I wanted a feel for the interconnectedness of the food publishing world in New York and an understanding of the soup to nuts workflow of producing a magazine food section.

I got both, in spades. Within an hour of arriving at the Good Housekeeping test kitchen on the 29th floor of the Hearst Building on West 57th Street, Susan had introduced me to their recipe testing protocol and I was working on three recipes for the following day’s holiday issue photoshoot.

Making me feel I was a contributing, valued member of the team was the first of Susan’s many mentoring successes. She found the time to take my comments into full consideration about the recipes, suggestions for prop styling, and source recommendation.

With Sharon hosting me in her testing lab—the place where all kitchen gear gets, or fails to get, the “Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval,” we developed a testing protocol for home deep fryers. She schooled me in advertising/editorial separation of church and state, the role of consumer advocacy in our industry, and the delicate balance between useful technology and needless bells and whistles.

A highlight was dinner with Suzi O’Rourke, Michele Scicolone, Deborah Mintcheff and Jeanne Voltz at Haldi, a fabulous Indian place. My takeaway from the dinner circles back to my starting quote. Being in the presence of women who have spent their careers helping other women, respecting their time and relishing their talents, is truly a life-changing opportunity.

This experience opened my eyes and made me further realize how unglamorous our industry is. Often enough, I have guests expressing to me, “Oh, it must be so much fun to be a chef/sommelier. Your job is to create delicious dishes and pair with great wines.” Although food is our passion and we love what we do, guests don’t see the long hours we put in studying and researching and hard work of food preparations. The details to execute each dish make it seem effortless to our guests.

Nora just celebrated her 70th birthday, is the author of two books, and travels on book tours sharing her amazing stories. She also owns a sustainable seafood distribution company, which supplies many local eateries in Washington, D.C., and still works 12 to 13 hours a day. It is not glamorous. She showed me that hard work is the foundation of her restaurant’s success.
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CHAPTER NEWS  Janet Burgess (LA/OC)

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ATLANTA
Gayle Skelton

We had such fun in November at our second “Dames Who Play in the Kitchen,” inspired by and in memory of our dear Lea Brueckner. Hosted by Stacy Zeigler and Gena Berry, the theme was “Dames Who Don’t Know Jack.” Fare ranged from Jackfruit appetizers to Woodsmoke Jack’s Trout Salad, Amber Jack in parchment paper, and a finale of Jacques Pepin’s chocolate mousse. To round out the evening we had a fabulous Apple Jack Cocktail, and Kendall “Jack”son wines, and a playlist created with all our Jack favorites. Creativity was not lacking! It was a great night to connect with new and tenured Dames alike.

Later in November, we gathered for our chapter meeting, LDEI Atlanta Looking Ahead. The Iberian Pig in Decatur treated us to an assortment of delicious tapas and wine pairings in a private room as we raised a toast to 2015 and celebrated the installation of the 2016 Board. We went “Home for the Holidays” in December as Melissa Bunnen hosted us at her lovely home for this annual tradition. This fabulous potluck dinner provided a festive end to 2015.

In January, we hosted our annual fundraiser, Culinary Futures, which funds our Aspiring Culinarian Scholarship. This tasting event held in conjunction with the January Housewares Show at AmericasMart features live entertainment and a raffle. Most importantly, through attendee and sponsor support we raise over $25,000 in one short evening, enabling a high school senior to attend culinary school on a scholarship.

BRITISH COLUMBIA
Nancy Wong

On November 26, 2015, some Vancouver Dames and friends gathered over dinner and improv comedy to kick off the holiday season at the chapter’s quarterly “In-Reach.” A lovely family-style dinner at award-winning Edible Canada was followed by a hilarious performance of Christmas Queen 2 – You Better Watch Out at Vancouver TheatreSports. The “Queen” joined us for a photo at the selfie station.

CLEVELAND
Shara Bohach

The Cleveland Chapter introduced a new postcard to help increase awareness, visibility, and grow the chapter. Designed by Shara Bohach of Unity Design, its front displays the Cleveland Chapter logo along with a description of the organization, and its back features a vibrant collage of Cleveland Dames, events, meetings, food, and drink. The chapter plans to use it to promote general awareness of the organization and its members as well as for member recruitment.

In November, Gloria Cipri Kemer hosted a dinner and program about new coffees she is featuring at her Emerald Necklace Inn Tea Room. Dames enjoyed a delightful array of hors d’oeuvres, cocktails, and delicious dinner in the tea room’s lovely Victorian setting. Annie Denton of Red Cedar Coffee Company gave an intriguing presentation about her expeditions in Costa Rica sourcing coffee. The evening wrapped up with dessert and—the reason for the evening—coffees and teas!

COLORADO
Sandra Dogan

In December, our chapter shared holiday cheer at a brunch at Michele Morris’ home in Denver. Michele prepared a gluten-free and vegetarian brunch for the group, and a number of Dames shared in a cookie exchange.

In January, Kuvy Ax arranged a fundraising event for the Colorodo Chapter at Aloy Modern Thai, one of Kuvy’s clients. Guests paid a fee to the chapter to attend the restaurant’s soft opening, and in turn, enjoyed a handcrafted cocktail and a three-course dinner featuring some of the incredible dishes the restaurant will be serving. Aloy Modern Thai’s co-owner Bo Bean generously donated all proceeds from the evening—including cash donations made to a “blessings tree”—to the chapter in support of our 2016 scholarship program.

DALLAS
Suzanne D. Felber

The Dallas Chapter has been deep into planning our annual fundraiser, Raiser Grazer, which will be held at the Dallas Farmers Market on April 3, 2016. A committee retreat was held to help finalize details; all of our members have been committed to making this the most profitable event we have held to provide even more scholarships in the future. Hayley Hamilton Cogill and her nonprofit Dallas Uncorked held a wine dinner featuring Merryvale wines that raised over $2,000 for our chapter! Hayley has also been hard at work on Raiser Grazer, and is chairing our fundraising committee.

The holidays found many of our Dames giving back. Lifestylist Suzanne Felber was responsible for helping furnish and equip an apartment for a homeless woman and her two children. The mother works for Kroger, and one of the daughters is putting herself through college working at Eatzis Market and Bakery. She made sure the kitchen was fully equipped and the pantry and refrigerator was full so this deserving family could have what they needed for their new lives.

A group of Dames joined Mary Kimbrough to cook and serve at the annual Stewpot Holiday Ladies Lunch. The Stewpot offers a safe haven for homeless and at risk individuals in Dallas, and it was an honor to serve women on this special day.
HAWAII

Marsha Dupont Taylor

The Governor of Hawaii proclaimed October 22, 2015, as “Les Dames d’Escoffier (LDEI) Food Day Celebration.” Pam Boyar who runs The Farmers Market in Waima Valley on the North Shore of Oahu hosted this event. The special day was to call attention to the rising awareness of food literacy, knowledge of farmers and local sustainable food practices.

LDEI recognized the critical role of farmers, farmers markets, CSAs, and local growers to create flourishing societies, thriving economies, and healthy environments. LDEI felt this would provide an opportunity to demonstrate their gratitude to the local area farmers markets, and CSAs that provide a rich variety of locally grown agricultural products. LDEI highlighted the local challenges that require all of us to apply critical thinking, communication, creativity, and collaboration towards building a more sustainable food source. LDEI continues to promote opportunities and recognizes the connections of our food to our environment, economic and social challenges that face us here in Hawaii.

The “first lady of food,” Hawaii’s First Lady, Dawn Ige, was the honored guest. Wailua culinary teacher Marsha Taylor presented Mrs. Ige with an apron and baskets of food from the Farmers Market. Wailua High and intermediate school presented the winning photo of the “Know your farmer, know your food” contest and T-shirt of student art. (#northshorelocavore) This contest showcased the awareness of the students to the richness of the rural North Shore agricultural area.

LOS ANGELES/ORANGE COUNTY

Deirdre Michalski

The LA/OC Chapter welcomed the holidays in style—farm style, that is. One of our newest members, Anne Manassero, kindly opened her Manaserro Farms in Irvine, California, to celebrate the holidays in her charming venue. They have been farming in this area for a staggering 93 years. Sitting in a huge tent adorned with antique wooden frames and stained glass, the wooden picnic tables were decorated with burlap and large lanterns. We shared a delicious potluck from all the amazing cooks and chefs! We also enjoyed mulled wine, great food and beautiful and yummy sweets for dessert.

Northeast Chapter members Marilee Spanjian and Barbara Lauterbach joined together for a savory and sweet hands-on culinary adventure for non-professional cooks in December. Tucked inside Marilee’s cooking classroom, The Hidden Kitchen at The Inn at Weathersfield in Perkinsville, Vermont, Barbara, a Certified Cooking Professional, cookbook author and former B & B owner, shared tips, techniques and preparations for holiday entertaining. Students learned to make everything from Brie Strata to Spinach Timbales to Cranberry Marscapone Pots de Crème. On February 27, award-winning author Molly Stevens returns to The Hidden Kitchen to teach a hands-on Braising vs. Roasting class.

NASHVILLE

Mindy Merrell

The Nashville Chapter started off 2016 with a celebratory Mid-Winter Get-Together on January 11 at the Goo Goo Shop in downtown Nashville. Beth Sachan, Goo Goo's marketing director, explained the colorful history of Nashville’s iconic candy and how the brand was reinvented for the 21st century. During the event, these four newest members were formally welcomed into the Nashville chapter with a congratulatory toast:

- Erin Byers Murray, author and managing editor at Nashville Lifestyles magazine and grand-prize winner of LDEI’s 2015 M.E.K. Fisher Awards for Excellence in Culinary Writing;
- Melissa Corbin, food and travel journalist and founder/owner of Corbin in the Dell, a local food and content strategy consultation service;
- Maneet Chauhan, chef/owner of Chauhan Ale & Masala House, Mantra Artisan Ales, and a judge on the Food Network show “Chopped” and
- Melinda Knight, pastry chef and owner of Melinda’s Kitchen providing catering services and cooking and baking classes; Upcoming events for 2016 include Bourbon Bash, Table at the Back Dinner get-togethers, the Eat-Walk-Nashville tour, and cooking to benefit the Nashville Food Project.
PALM SPRINGS
Pamela Bieri

Palm Springs is gearing up for their L’Affaire Chocolat. High Tea at the Classic Club planned for February 21. The planning committee—Chair Janet Harris, Dawn Rashid, Ellen Spencer, and Andrea Rosenblatt, with Charlisie Osborn, Classic Club events manager, have been working hard to make it a fabulous affair. The seventeenth annual event is the Palm Springs Chapter’s major fundraising event featuring a live auction, raffle drawings and capped off by a delicious chocolate dessert buffet over 25 feet long.

Dames brought food and/or volunteered to feed more than 300 people the week before Thanksgiving at Cavalry Christian Center in Cathedral City, as a community outreach effort to those in need. Thanks to Mindy Reed, Kelly McFall, Molly Hosner, and Gail Nottberg for their generous food donations. Volunteering to serve food were Ellen Spencer, Devlin Hosner, Molly Hosner, Larry Jenkins, Holly Adams, Sandra Torres, Pamela Bieri, Andrea Rosenblatt, Janet Harris, Elisabeth Wood, and Dawn Rashid.

A Holiday Party, held in the festively decorated home of Dawn Rashid and her husband Ken, was attended by Gail Nottberg, membership chair; Lisa Wherry, vice president and immediate past president; Nancy Cohoe, treasurer; Mary Clare Mulhall, secretary; and Bonnie Barkley, Kristy Kneiding, Sue Rappaport, Dawn Rashid, Ellen Spencer, and Pamela Bieri, president.

ST. LOUIS
Cecily Hoffius

We kicked off the year with our Annual Meeting on January 13. It was held at Ces & Judy’s Catering at Le Chateau where we enjoyed wine and light hors d’oeuvres. We reviewed 2015 and planned ahead for two great fundraisers in 2016. It will be a repeat of our successful wine tasting night with a comparison of new versus old styles of wines. Liz Kniep from Pinnacle has been instrumental in getting this program put together with tremendous support from Marilyn Freundlich and her committee. Over 100 attended last year, and we hope for more in 2016.

We are also repeating the fun Craft Cocktail Event held at Off Broadway. Patty Long Catering. Arlene Maminta Browne helped the committee get commitments from several local distillers and it was a great event and enjoyable evening.

On April 15, we will hold our first Global Culinary Initiative event, a Taste of India dinner. Judy Bellos, Nina Furstenau and Roberta Duyff, along with the committee are working to put together a very fun, informative evening.

A Beekeeping program with Priscilla Ward and Wendy Kapsak Reinhardt, and a cooperative with Operation Food Search, Sunny Schaefer are in the works. Stay tuned!

SAN ANTONIO
Nichole Bendele

The holiday season was busy but it didn’t slow our Dames down! The San Antonio Chapter celebrated the seventh Annual Roy Mass Youth Alternatives-LDEI Holiday Luncheon by providing gingerbread house decorating, a luncheon, and Christmas presents for the children to unwrap. Dames and various local businesses donated products, services and their time to make a joyous occasion for the children who wouldn’t be with their families during the holidays.

Our chapter’s Green Tables Initiative has teamed up with Wilson Elementary this year to show students how to make and cook healthy food choices at a young age. Our Dames have given cooking demos to get the students involved. To celebrate the December holiday season, freshly made hot chocolate was served for 500 students to enjoy. ¡Delicioso! Our chapter also had a food drive collecting 500 turkeys (Sysco courtesy price), canned goods, and pet food for the SA Time Dollar Community. Its focus is to create community by providing programs that build respect through reciprocity and social networks. The program also allows people to donate their “assets or gifts” in exchange for produce from their garden, services, gardening, and tutoring. ¡Salud!

WASHINGTON, D.C.
Ann Stratte

A huge turnout of 88 people attended “The Life and Times of Julia Child” by Barbara Haber, who flew down from Boston on December 12 to give the talk at RIS Restaurant; Ris Lacoste opened her entire restaurant for our event, which was chaired by CiCi Williamson. (The restaurant is not open for Saturday luncheon.) Door prizes of Julia Child books were given, and Les Dames gave Barbara a Julia Child Rose bush to plant in her yard. The menu comprised Julia Child’s favorite foods, and Barbara, a close friend of Julia’s, gave wonderful reminiscences of Grande Dame Julia. Barbara was herself the recipient of LDEI’s $5000 MFK Fisher Award.

The following evening, over forty D.C. Dames gathered for our annual Holiday Potluck hosted by Bonnie Benwick in the tony Gold Coast (Crestwood) neighborhood of Northwest Washington. Fantastic food, wine and conversation flowed throughout the evening. Drew Faulkner and Kari Barrett held an informative meeting with the members, before the party, to discuss the annual LDEI conference to be held in Washington in October.
ATLANTA
Natasha Cary has joined the award winning Atlanta event-production company, Destination South Meetings & Events as Managing Director.

Karen Bremer, Executive Director of the Georgia Restaurant Association, was named one of Georgia Trend Magazine’s 100 Most Influential Georgians identified as having an enormous impact on daily lives.

Virginia Willis is partnering with WGBH-TV and Laurie Donnelly (Boston), Executive Producer for Life-styles and Special Projects, for the development of a national PBS show, “Secrets of the Southern Table™: A Food Lover’s Tour of the Global South.”

Judith Winfrey was honored by Wholesome Wave Georgia for her years of volunteer service and by their creation of the Judith Winfrey Leadership & Innovation Award that recognizes leadership and innovations which connect organizations, families, and farmers to build a stronger local food community.

BIRMINGHAM
Brooke Bell is now the Director of Editorial Operations at Hoffman Media. She oversees the editorial of six magazines, including: Taste of the South, Louisiana Cookin’, Cooking with Paula Deen, Entertain Decorate Celebrate, and the newly launched Bake from Scratch and Southern Cast Iron. www.hoffmanmedia.com

Betsy McAtee, COO of Dreamland Holding Company, was named Restaurateur of the Year by the Alabama Restaurant & Hospitality Alliance and also the Birmingham Business Alliance Small Business Executive of the Year. Her company also won the Alabama Retailer of the Year Gold Medal presented by the Alabama Retail Association.


Katherine Cobbs, Time Inc. Books Senior Editor, announces the release of United Tastes of Texas - Authentic Recipes from All Corners of the Lone Star State, authored by Jessica Dupuy (Austin). This publication is based on Central, Coastal, East, South, and West Texas regions and the influence of settlers from Czechoslovakia, Germany, Mexico, and Spain.

BOSTON
Lisa Griffiths and partner, John Grant were presented with three National-Hometown Media Awards for their TV show titled, “All Things Victorian” with Victorian Lady Lisa. Among the programs in the series are: the Queen’s Kitchen and Victorian Baking.

BRITISH COLUMBIA
Alison Markin, for the third consecutive year, will speak at the International Wine Tourism Conference, in Barcelona, Spain. Her topic is Entrepreneur-Tourism, the blending of wine and culinary businesses with tourism and entrepreneurship. Previously she presented at the conferences in Tbilisi, Georgia, and Reims, France.


CHARLESTON
Nancie McDermott’s 11th cookbook, Southern Soups and Stews: More than 70 Recipes from Burgoo and Gumbo to Etouffée and Fricassee, was published by Chronicle Books in September. It was featured in “The Local Palate,” “The Kitchn,” “Leite’s Culinaria,” and “Yahoo Food.”

CHICAGO
Ina Pinckney. The closing of her beloved restaurant was made into a documentary and hit the festival circuit, including the Chicago International Film Festival and the Atlanta International Documentary Film Festival, where it won gold. Her cookbook/memoir, Ina’s Kitchen, was recently published by Agate.

DALLAS
Michele Brown was named Texas Chef’s Association “2016 Pastry Chef of the Year” for the third time and competed at the American Culinary Federation Central Regional level in St. Louis in March. In October she will compete at the IKA Culinary Olympics in Germany with the Epicurean World Master Chef Society USA.

HAWAII
Denise Hiyashi Yamaguchi and husband, Chef Roy Yamaguchi (Roy’s Hawaiian Fusion “Cuisine) received the 2015 Fest Forward Convergence’s Best of the Fest—Best Charitable Division in the Hawaii Food and Wine Festival. The festival raised over $350K for 16 nonprofits in Hawaii.

Dianne Vicheinrut became Corporate Director of Food and Beverage at all Outrigger Hotels worldwide.

Claire Sullivan was promoted to Store Team Leader at Whole Foods Kahala.

Michelle Karr Ueoka is the award winning pastry chef at her restaurant MW and recently opened Artizen in the Hawaii State Art Museum, a café selling sandwiches, burgers and of course her beautiful and delicious pastries

Marie Tucker became General Manager at the Gazebo Café at Macy’s.
LOS ANGELES/ORANGE COUNTY

Patti Larson and her team were featured in the Orange County Register newspaper. Article and photo highlighted their nonprofit program, Food Finders—a food recovery program serving hundreds of shelters and pantries in Los Angeles and Orange County by linking donated food from grocers, hotels, and restaurants to those in need. www.foodfinders.org (see page 30).

Anne Willan contributed to The Edible Monument: The Art of Food for Festivals. She wrote a Thanksgiving article for Zester Daily, “Serving Up America: Thanksgiving At Versailles.”

NASHVILLE

Cara Graham and Chef Hal Holden-Bache, owners of Lockeland Table, published their first book, Lockeland Table Community Kitchen and Bar. The book brings the restaurant alive with recipes and stories of its creation in this east Nashville community.

Sylvia Ganier, owner of Green Door Gourmet, Nashville’s premier organic and agitourism farm, was visited by Kristen Harden, United States Deputy Secretary of Agriculture. Consequently, Ms. Harden invited Sylvia to address a “Women in Ag” luncheon in February to share her farm story with women involved in food, farming, and policy.

Billie Joyce Helmkay received her WSET Diploma from the Wine Spirits and Education Trust in London. This entailed a three-year rigorous study and testing program covering all aspects of the industry, history, viticulture, oenology, and commerce of wine. This diploma is an entry into the most prestigious Master of Wine Program.

NEW YORK

Claire Criscuolo along with her beloved family and staff celebrated the 40th anniversary of her vegetarian restaurant, Claire’s Corner Copia, on September 17. This New Haven landmark has been providing real food, organic, and sustainable, made from scratch recipes, for many years.

Carol Prager has been the Project Editor for five Good Housekeeping cookbooks, including Fun Food Fast! (Sterling Publishing). She also writes a column, “Comfort Food Facelift,” in Weight Watchers magazine.

Marion Nestle wintered in Australia to work at the University of Sydney on a new book project.

NORTHEAST

Christine Burns Rudalevige’s story “Revising the Christmas Goose” was featured in the holiday issue of Edible Seacoast and made it to the top of the Yahoo food page throughout December. Christine was a 2015 LDEI Legacy Award Winner (see page 22) and is a new Dame.

Joanna James was just inducted into Les Amis d’Escoffier Society. Joanna is a Director/Producer at Arianna Productions and is putting the finishing touches on a documentary titled “Celebrity Women Chefs Transforming the Food Industry” that explores the role of women chefs featuring Val James and Lidia Bastianich.

Nancy Batista-Caswell of The Caswell Restaurant Group is happy to announce her third restaurant Oak + Rowan in Boston, opening in the spring of 2016. She has two other exciting eateries that she’s brought to New England through picturesque Newburyport: Ceia Kitchen + Bar, and BRINE Oyster.

Carole Murko launched the Heirloom Meals Recipe Project and will be offering a “do-it-yourself” video and a “done-for-you” service phase to her new venture. It features a fabulous outline for collecting family food memories and preserving them for future generations in a beautiful keepsake hardcover book.

Mary Reilly, Publisher of Edible Pioneer Valley, and host of “The Kitchen Workshop” radio show, was appointed as co-leader of the Chefs Collaborative Western Mass Local Chapter. The first meeting and educational demonstration was held at Adams Farm in western Massachusetts which included a humane slaughtering demonstration and discussion.

Beth Casoni, executive director of the Massachusetts Lobstermen’s Association, sponsored “Lobster Day” to honor the contributions lobstermen make to the Commonwealth. Local fishermen and lawmakers celebrated at the State House. There are approximately 50 lobster ports with commercial fisherman in Massachusetts; second only to Maine in the lobster industry.

Cait Reagan’s award-winning Edible Seacoast magazine has changed its name to Edible New Hampshire. This magazine celebrates the state’s harvest with insightful features and stunning photography conveying the many stories of restaurants in historic downtowns, newly cultivated farms, and homesteads that have farmed continuously for centuries.

Maria Speck, award-winning food journalist and cookbook author, announces that her new Simply Ancient Grains (Ten Speed Press) was selected as a top cookbook for 2015 by The Washington Post, Huffington Post, and Sweet Paul, as well as on NPR’s “Here & Now.”

PALM SPRINGS

Kathleen Bennett received an Award of Excellence for her dedication to furthering Palm Springs’ illustrious profile at a December celebration sponsored by the Hyatt Palm Springs called “Holiday in Palm Springs.” Bennett is lead consultant to restaurants, retail, resorts, associations, and non-profits, and board secretary of the Palm Springs Walk of Stars.

Jennifer Town, executive chef at The Purple Room, was recently featured on Food Network’s “Guilty Pleasures,” premiering in “Thanksgiving Madness.”

Angela Janus, founder and executive director of ShareKitchen, received the Leonela Torres Award, Business Woman of the Year from the Coachella Chamber of Commerce in December. She was honored for her exemplary work forging better communications between farmers and consumers.

PHILADELPHIA


Kathy Gold was featured on CNBC’s show “Escaping the Cube,” which features people who left power careers on Wall Street to find new success when they follow a passion. The segment was filmed at her cooking school, In the Kitchen (see photo on page 19).

Dottie Koteski has acquired a different set of skills and encountered new challenges as the general manager of a family-owned wholesale food distributor. These include wrangling fresh-food prices with vendors at the Philadelphia Wholesale Distribution Center, direct purchasing from Northwest and Midwest suppliers/co-ops, setting prices, and maintaining customer relations.
Amber Stott and her nonprofit Food Literacy Center in partnership with the Sacramento Unified School district received a $100,000 USDA Farm to School grant to help with procurement of fresh vegetables and for garden, nutrition and cooking education for students in three pilot elementary schools.

Carolyn Kumpe had her recipe for Creamy Apple Parnsip Soup selected for publication in Soup for Syria: Building Peace Through Food (Interlink Publishing, Sept. 2015). Kumpe also catered a wedding in California’s Gold Country that was featured in the winter 2015/spring 2016 issue of Real Weddings.

Andrea Lepore opened a third location of Hot Italian in Davis which added to her anchor location in Sacramento and a second in Emeryville. Lepore also graduated with honors from Boston Architectural College’s Master of Sustainable Design program.

Shannin Stein was promoted to general manager of the new $4 million 225-seat 50-employee meat-centric Empress Tavern. The restaurant received the maximum 4 stars in a review from the Sacramento Bee three months after opening.

Rosemary Kowalski has been selected as “Parade Marshal” for the Battle of Flowers Parade during Fiesta 2016, a 125 year old festival in San Antonio. Grande Dame Kowalski started and owns The RK Group, catering company.

Christine McCrae Kelly was featured in Food Network magazine (December 2015) with one of her decorative, yet edible cookies. “Merry Texmas” was a decorated longhorn cookie in the shape of an ornament. Christine owns Lily’s Cookies.

Crystal Dady catered to Vice President Joe Biden on his visit to the Alamo City while he was in town attending a Democratic National Committee event on November 18, 2015. Crystal and her husband own the Jason Dady Restaurant & Catering Group.

Nancy Ash led tastings of olive oils, harvested in 2015 from California and international regions, at a UC-Davis Olive Center tasting held at Seka Hills, an award-winning olive oil mill established on Indian land. Ash is deputy taste panel leader for the California Olive Oil Commission.

Georgeanne Brennan launched her product line of La Vie Rustic, Sustainable Living in the French Style, at the Rancho Gordo retail store at the Ferry Plaza in San Francisco and in Napa. Elaine Corn created the ceramic gratin dishes and salt cellars. www.lavierustic.com

Amina Harris, chair of the Honey division for the Good Food Awards in San Francisco, selected and supervised a tasting panel of more than 20 honey judges who tasted upwards of 80 honeys. Winners were announced during the Fancy Food Show in January 2016.

Kathy Casey’s Liquid Kitchen agency has collaborated on the new Fairmont Hotel & Resorts Classics Perfected global cocktail program. The Global mixology team met at Casey’s Seattle Innovation Center last summer for an intensive cocktail development session. The new cocktail menu is available at all Fairmont locations worldwide.

Cynthia Nims’ Oysters: Recipes that Bring Home a Taste of the Sea was chosen by Amazon editors as a “best books” cookbook release for January 2016. Cynthia was asked to serve on a judging panel for the North American Oyster Showcase in Gulf Shores, Alabama, in November.

Renee Erickson, a James Beard award-winning chef, has opened three new restaurants on Seattle’s Capitol Hill: Bar Melusine (seafood), Bateau (specializing in dry-aged, grass-fed beef), and General Porpoise Doughnuts (confections and sparkling wine).

Lisa Nakamura, Chef/Owner of Gnocchi Bar, now offers her famous potato gnocchi in three Seattle-area PCC stores. The packaged frozen product is fully cooked and can go from freezer to sauté pan.

Thoa Nguyen, Chef/Restaurateur, adds to her new mini-empire of local restaurants with the addition of Sushi Chinoise. The new restaurant features a taste of Asian with fresh sushi delicacies, seafood, and vegetables cooked in an open kitchen.

Nancy Baggett gave a presentation at the annual conference of the Home Baking Association last month. She spoke on the topic, “Baking Ephemera—A Fun Look Back at Baking in America.”

Amy Brandwein won DC Central Kitchen’s “Capital Food Fight” competition on November 12 pitted against culinary luminaries K.N. Vinod of Indique, Harper McClure of BRABO and Nick Stefanelli of Masseria.

Jennifer Farley will be teaching a week-long food photography workshop in the heart of Tuscany. She teamed with Nostrale Tour to lead a small group through medieval villages, where newly learned photography skills will be put to the test in picturesque settings filled with amazing food and wine.

Aviva Goldfarb’s fourth cookbook The Six O’Clock Scramble Meal Planner: A Year of Quick, Delicious Meals to Help You Prevent and Manage Diabetes (American Diabetes Association, 2016) was published on February 9. The photos were styled by Lisa Cherkasky.

Susan Holt and her cooking school Culinaire were featured in The Washington Post on November 21, 2015, in “How to cook your turkey to perfection: Tips from the pros that recounted the history and effectiveness of the ubiquitous pop-up turkey timer.” Susan ran an evaluation of a chorus line of turkeys fitted with various brands of pop-up timers.

Susan James’ Stonyman Gourmet Farmer was featured in The Washington Post’s “Our Top Gift Ideas for the Food and Drink Lover.”

Patj Jinch, host of the PBS-TV show “Pati’s Mexican Kitchen,” was a guest on Carla Hall’s “The Chew.”

Ris LaCoste and Nora Poullon were profiled as two of “The Most Powerful Women in Washington” in the December edition of Washingtonian Magazine. Ris was featured in the Winter/Holiday edition of Edible DC. “The Apple of Ris LaCoste’s Eye.” It is a Q&A about her approach to cooking and eating apples. Restaurant Nora was named as one of “Dupont Circle’s Top 10” restaurants by TheCultureTrip.com. She spoke at the Virginia Festival of the Book in Charlottesville, March 18, about her book, My Organic Life: How a Pioneering Chef Helped Shape the Way We Eat Today.

Marjorie Meek-Bradley won weeks one and seven of BRAVO-TV’s “Top Chef,” season 13 and is one of the top three finalists. Marjorie is Executive Chef of Ripple, and Rooters Union restaurants.
Les Dames d’Escoffier International

Vickie Reh was pictured and featured in Linda Roth’s Food Service Monthly “The Latest Dish” column to announce Vickie’s appointment as chef and wine director of Via Umbria.

Paula Shoyer was honored at an awards luncheon in December by Jewish Woman International as one of 10 Women to Watch for her contributions to improving desserts and food in the Jewish community and beyond.

Jodi Steiner has taken a fulltime chef position with Via Umbria an Italian market in Georgetown joining Chef/Director Vickie Reh.

Polly Wiedmaier and husband Chef Robert Wiedmaier and their Chesapeake Bay retreat were featured in an article, “a Chef’s Christmas on Chesapeake Bay,” in the December 2015 edition of Coastal Living Magazine. Three of their restaurants were in Washingtonian magazine’s top 100.

IN MEMORIAM

Gladys Howard (Dallas) 1932-2015

By Dotty Griffith

The Dallas Chapter lost another founding member with the passing of Gladys Howard October 3, 2015, after a four-year battle with cancer.

Along with the late Diane Teitelbaum, Gladys, 83, was part of the group, along with longtime friend Dolores Snyder, who laid the groundwork in 1984 for the Dallas chapter which has become one of LDEI’s largest and most active. Diane, 68, died Dec. 7, 2014.

Gladys’ life in food was one of devotion to authenticity. She operated a cooking school and gourmet catering service in Tyler (100 miles east of Dallas) for 20 years before finding real passion and inspiration in the Caribbean on the island she called “my paradise.”

In 1986, she bought a small resort on Little Cayman, BWI. At the time of her death, Pirate’s Point Resort was known as a world class dive facility and accommodations with extraordinary cuisine.

The following is excerpted from The Tyler Morning Telegraph, Oct. 8, 2015: “Gladys was the recipe editor for the cookbook, Cook ’em Horns, (compiled) for the University of Texas Centennial, for which she won an Addy Award (award for the best print material) in 1993.

“Gladys was instrumental in building the National Trust House on Little Cayman. She was dedicated to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, which is now listed in the publication 1000 Places to See Before You Die. She was inducted into the International Scuba Diving Hall of Fame on October 2, 2015.

“Gladys was instrumental in building the National Trust House on Little Cayman. She was president of the American Association of University Women (Tyler Chapter), and The Gladys B. Howard Endowment was established in her name, providing stipends for women to use for higher education.” To read more about this remarkable Dame, go to www.tylerpaper.com.

GLOBAL CULINARY postcard

Uzbekistan Feast Enjoyed by Washington, D.C., Dames

Dames dined family style at a bountiful feast of 11 menu items at the Rus-Uz restaurant in Arlington, Virginia—the Washington area’s only Russian-Uzbekistan restaurant. The February issue of Washingtonian magazine, named Rus-Uz one of the top 100 of the area’s 2000 restaurants. A sellout crowd of 55 people listened while Abraham Rakhmatullaev, born in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, explained the dishes from his Central Asia country. Abraham is the restaurant manager while his father, Bakhtiyor Rakhmatullaev, is the chef and owner.

Uzbekistan, slightly larger than California, was once on the Silk Road—part of the ancient Persian Empire. Uzbek cuisine, often cooked over open flames or in tandoons, is flavored with black cumin, peppers, barberries, coriander, and sesame seeds. The more common herbs are cilantro, dill, parsley, celery, and basil. Among the dishes tasted at the event chaired by GiGi Williamson was Plov, a long-cooked dish studded with tender lamb, raisins, and carrots, which is the “national dish of Uzbekistan.”

MILESTONES continued

Polly Wiedmaier and husband Chef Robert Wiedmaier and their Chesapeake Bay retreat were featured in an article, “A Chef’s Christmas on Chesapeake Bay,” in the December 2015 edition of Coastal Living Magazine. Three of their restaurants were in Washingtonian magazine’s top 100.
Making That Connection

By Deirdre Michalski
(LA/OC Chapter)

Women helping other women is what it is all about in Les Dames. And what a special day it was when I realized that an incredible connection had been made by two members of our chapter who sat at the same table for our annual luncheon.

Meet new member, Anne Manaserro, married to a third generation farmer in Irvine with five farm stands and a huge business. Then on the other side of the table, meet Patti Larson, Executive Director of Food Finders, Inc., a wonderful non-profit program that brings grocers/restaurants/hotels/farms together with homeless shelters, food pantries and other places in need of food.

As life would have it, people meet in the most interesting of circumstances. And on this day, Anne who has been donating fresh produce to Food Finders for years, had the chance to meet Patti, the Executive Director of that very program! What fun that was to watch these two ladies exchange ideas and thank one another for their help and such a wonderful program.

What are the odds of these two ladies meeting and sitting at the same table? This is just another example of how Les Dames d’Escoffier makes a difference. We are grateful for these connections and applaud women helping other women with open arms. It really warmed my heart to see this unfold, knowing both of these lovely ladies, seeing them exchange ideas, and thank one another for their help.

E-NEWS

This bimonthly publication will keep you informed about events in other chapters and encourages networking. Press releases are not accepted. Include an email contact, date, time, and cost for chapter events. Lack of space prevents member milestones, product news, listing of cooking classes, or tours. You will receive a reminder call for “E-News” email. Respond to E-News Editor, Shelley Pedersen, at ldeinews@gmail.com

UPCOMING in the summer issue

- Dames in Hospitality Careers
- Washington, D.C. Conference Review
- LDEI Partner Wente Family Estates
Keynote Speaker Brings James Beard Foundation to Washington

James Beard loved to travel. He covered the walls of his kitchen with a map of the world, which is still a treasured feature at the Beard House today. Wouldn't he be thrilled to know that Susan Ungaro, President of the James Beard Foundation (JBF), will be the keynote speaker at "Global Appetite, Local Impact," LDEI's 2016 Conference in Washington, D.C.!

Since 2006, Susan has expanded JBF's dedication to celebrating, nurturing, and honoring America's diverse culinary heritage through programs that educate and inspire. Among her many accomplishments, Susan has increased the Foundation's national and global awareness, as well as its culinary scholarship program, membership base, and thought-leadership programs. Come hear this extraordinary woman—just one of the many fabulous facets of LDEI's 2016 Conference!

Susan Ungaro leans on the counter of the Beard House kitchen with Mr. Beard's map of the world behind her.