Hands ON!

My husband always says that the best gifts are the ones made by hand with loving care. I’m willing to bet that you have some keepsakes from your children or grandchildren that were made with their little chubby hands. Possibly these are not without flaws, which makes them all the more personal.

These same little darlings might have wandered into some of your own craft projects or decorated birthday cakes and have been told, “Hands OFF!” In the business food world, however, the words to describe artisan food and beverage producers would be “Hands ON!” Mass produced sleeves of buttery crackers, jars of processed cheese, bottles of tomato juice, or months-old boxes of chocolate chip cookies—to name a few—would never be described as artisan food products.

The dozen Dames featured on pages 4–11 are definitely hands-on artisans who not only created their own businesses but also have a hand in the products they turn out.

Thanks go to the dozen Dames who told these artisans’ stories. Many other Dames also contributed to this issue, especially those who shared their virtual chapter fundraisers, programs, opinions, and reports. Dottie Koteski (Philadelphia), our Member Milestone editor, and Nichole Bendele (San Antonio), our Chapter Program editor, helped by compiling all the photos and writeups that come in via the platforms (see submission guidelines on page 31).

I am enjoying working with our LDEI 2nd Vice President Erin Byers Murray (Nashville) who was the grand prize winner of the 2015 LDEI M.F.K. Fisher Award for Excellence in Culinary Writing. At the time, she wasn’t a Dame, but subsequently, she was invited to join the Nashville Chapter and became its president. Way to go, Erin! I’d call that “Hands on,” too.

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

Springing Forward!

Happy Spring, dear Dames.

As spring unfolds and the pandemic offers signs of improvement with vaccines and opening of businesses, there is again a feeling of hope and positivity. While our industries have been affected very negatively, I am constantly impressed with the ingenuity of our Dames to pivot and survive, and some even flourish with new ideas. We are a resilient bunch!

LDEI has been very busy this winter and early spring. Table Talks with Les Dames has been such a joy to me in March as winter winds down. The interesting events have made the month pass in a flash. I hope you have all participated in a few. Special thanks to all the Dames that presented, prepared, and participated. Great sessions, and a great representation of our chapters.

Table Talks with Les Dames has attracted participants that have never been to a LDEI event before. This is a great boost for our brand image. In addition, the 2020-2023 Strategic Plan called for more above-chapter participation. Viola! We have done a lot of that with Zoom. I don't know about your feelings, but I feel so much more connected to LDEI members in general. I like the feeling—it’s motivational.

There's good news arising for Legacy Award winners who could not complete their experience in 2020. They will get to experience their award in summer 2021. Look for news from their experiences at Conference in October.

The Woman of Purpose is a new award for LDEI. The sponsorship by Yeti makes this award possible and will heighten the public awareness of the award and its winner. I can't wait to meet the woman who achieves this! The plan is to host the Woman of Purpose and the Grand Dame Award on alternating years. Both will be recognized at Conference this October.

Education has been on my mind all year. I have learned so much from the Table Talks with Les Dames events, but I am also glad that LDEI has been able to offer more. The Grant Writing webinar in January was definitely eye-opening to opportunities for funding as well as philanthropy for our chapters and for individual Dame community projects. Several chapters have begun work on grants, and a couple have already achieved success. The Grant Task Force is continuing Zoom meetings for support. Please avail yourself of this opportunity to gain funding to grow philanthropy and scholarships.

To offer as much support as possible to our Dame business owners, we were able to offer a webinar on the Earned Retention Tax Credit this spring, thanks to the San Antonio Chapter’s generous offer of knowledge and expertise. The event shared what the credit is, who qualifies, and how to take advantage of it. A big thanks to Leslie Komet Aubsrn and Allison Miller, CPA, for bringing this informative session to our Dames and their businesses.

An educational offering that is on point with today’s world is coming up in May through September. With Seattle Colleges and their Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion leader, Christina Chang, LDEI will offer an in-depth educational experience “Learning to Build a Diverse and Inclusive Culture.” See the back cover of this issue for more detail. This current, on-target training is useful for your business, your community, your personal life, and your LDEI chapter. An offering like this is usually only offered by large institutions or corporations. LDEI is offering it at a very small fee to the first 200 registrants (first come, first served). If the class fills, we can contract to repeat at later dates.

All current indications are that we can be together in San Antonio for 2021 LDEI Annual Conference. What an amazing experience that will be! Looking forward to a chat with each of you.

Judy
Judith Hollis Jones
President, Les Dames d’Escoffier International

2021 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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Artisanal food encompasses such products as breads, cheeses, preserves, cured meats, beverages, oils, spice mixtures, and vinegars that are made by skilled craftworkers, known as food artisans. In this feature, a dozen Dames wrote about a dozen artisans from a dozen different chapters. You can see many more Dames listed under the profession “Artisan food beverage producer” in the online or printed directory. Enjoy reading how these Dames succeeded in creating their products.—CiCi Williamson

Hands On!
Artisan Food & Beverage Producers

Wendy Rose,
Sparkling Wine Diva

By Renee Blackstone (British Columbia)

Wendy Rose  Bella Wines
Naramata, British Columbia
www.bellawines.ca/

It’s been love at first sparkle in more ways than one for Wendy Rose, Owner, Bella Wines—British Columbia’s only winery exclusively dedicated to sparkling wine.

With roots in the ‘70s California food and wine country, it’s no surprise Wendy found her own passion in producing unique sparkling wines in Canada’s premiere wine region, the Okanagan in British Columbia.

Together with her husband, Chef and Winemaker Jay Drysdale, Wendy launched Bella Sparkling Wines in 2011, one of only a dozen in the huge North American wine market.

Wendy developed her culinary chops from an early age. Her Mom was a chef who immersed herself in the California Cuisine pioneered by Grande Dame Alice Waters. Her dad, meanwhile, was a wine lover and connoisseur who—for 30 years—would import 150 cases of Alain Vessele French Champagne from Bouzy, France as the family’s house wine. “My parents entertained A LOT!” Wendy explains.

It fueled a life-long love of sparkling wine, but it wasn’t the road Wendy chose to follow initially. Her first career was in finance and technology, but food and wine began exerting their pull when she began taking a number of culinary school classes. She then decided to learn all she could about the wine business, beginning with working as a cellar hand for various wineries.

It wasn’t until she met Jay, however, that she began to see more clearly where else life could take her.

On one of their early dates, Jay confessed his dream was to start a boutique sparkling-wine house, preferably in British Columbia.

“It was Kismet!” Wendy says, adding that he’s been “blessed to make great wine,” while she’s “blessed to navigate the paperwork.”

As with any small business, there are a number of challenges unique to their endeavour. Foremost is “staying relevant in an ever changing market,” Wendy says. “We are hyper-focussed. We only make sparkling wine.”

Today, Bella produces only 3,000 cases of 20 different bubbles a year in two styles—traditional method and ancestrale method—using single vineyard crops of two grapes: gamay and chardonnay.

Some of their wines only have one ingredient: grapes. Wendy said. “We never set out to be pioneers of the natural wine movement but through a deeper understanding of our process, and the elimination of so many things, we evolved just at a time when the market was also looking for more natural products, without unnecessary additives.”

As well, as an artisanal business, “we do everything by hand,” Wendy explained. “We hand riddle our wines, we hand disgorge our ancestrales, and we hand label each bottle (including the neck tag). We’re a team of three: myself, my husband, and an assistant, and we do everything from weed the vineyard, through to working our farm tours and selling our products.”

Joining Les Dames was her way of giving back, Wendy said. “Education is hugely important to me and the BC Chapter Scholarship Program is a wonderful way to support women in our industry to further their skill sets.”

Renee Blackstone is Publishing Coordinator, Ecolechocolat.com, and a freelance editor/writer.
Veronica Castro: Coffee Grower and Roaster

By Sabrina A. Falquier Montgrain, MD (Mexico and San Diego)

Veronica Castro Diamansol Coffee
Col. Campestre Churubusco, Mexico
www.cafediamansol.com

What a pleasure to deep-dive into the world of Mexico LDEI chapter member Veronica Castro and her coffee brand - Diamansol Coffee.

As I write this, I sip on her delicious Sonrisa Del Mar (“Smile of the Sea”) blend. I picture her sitting across the table from me with her kind, welcoming smile and approachable ways. It doesn’t hurt that this image took place at Pujol Restaurant in Mexico City during Flavors of Mexico in the spring of 2020. The last gorgeous hurrah for many of us before our lives took a global halt.

Like many of us in LDEI, Veronica’s swerve in her career and life came forward from a lifelong side passion. Veronica had been in the hospitality industry with a full-throttle love for coffee. Seeing and conversing with a friend about planting and roasting coffee ignited the possibility of her swerve. Fast-forward a year later and she and this friend began working together. They now have two harvests and a farm in Puebla, Mexico. Alongside this, they work with farmers and communities in other areas of Mexico: Chiapas, Veracruz and Oaxaca. They consciously seek out working with women within these small communities. This is such perfection - full circle of empowering each other and one another’s work and creating opportunities for improved quality of life. Also, Veronica feels strongly that working with women is an indispensable part of the process to obtaining a quality product.

As Veronica’s passion flourished within the coffee world, she continued her search for further knowledge of the beautiful nuances of the coffee making process: Learning about harvests, altitude, temperature, humidity, and the country of Mexico, with its varied terroir, has many learning opportunities. Then comes the post production components of roasts, blends and brew. Each one of those categories can be a lifetime of learning. What a joy to deep-dive and find a delicious pourable output to ones life work!

She is ever-expanding her business: from wholesale clients and Amazon Mexico sales to the beginnings of wholesale and retail sales in the United States. These international aspects have taken a pause, yet will resume when the pandemic allows.

Café Diamansol specializes in selecting high-mountain coffees from different farms in Mexico, which are then classified in a meticulous way. Then, immediately after the harvest, the true miracle takes place during roasting “when the bean dances, gyrates, and exhales its variety of properties.”

I encourage you to explore her website www.cafediamansol.com as the description of each variety is sublime and true to its final outcome. She carries varieties with names such as Sonrisa de Luna (“Smile of the Moon”) and Sonrisa Parisiana (“Parisian Smile”).

I’ve never been so happy to know the face behind my coffee. Thank you, Veronica, for following your calling and taking us along. ¡Salud!

Sabrina A. Falquier Montgrain, MD, is an internal medicine physician with expertise in Culinary Medicine.

Jovan Sage Improves Wellness through Food

By Cathy Branciaroli

(Philadelphia)

Jovan Sage Sage’s Larder
Brunswick, Georgia
www.sageslarder.com

As the founding president of LDEI’s new Savannah and Coastal Georgia Chapter, Jovan Sage, the creator of Sage’s Larder and related businesses, is on a mission to promote wellness, sustainable food, and agriculture. She has worked for 20 years nationally and internationally to improve wellness through food. Her businesses span herbal solutions, and she considers herself a food alchemist, focusing on the intersections of race, culture within wellness, sustainability, food, and agriculture.

Jovan joined Les Dames as a result of being inspired by mentors and elders who helped her refine her skills and visions, and by the photographers and designers who helped her to see herself more clearly. She will tell you that it is by grace, hard work, and the support of a small army of women that she has achieved her success. Networking with other Dames has not only been a personal inspiration but an asset in promoting her business. A former Legacy Award winner, she is grateful for the connections and camaraderie she receives through Les Dames. She also is a volunteer and board member of Seed Savers Exchange.

As the alchemist at Sage’s Larder, Jovan guides people to find their own resiliency through food, herbal tea, and plants. She works with farmers and small food producers to help them visualize successful food businesses and create business strategies around value-added products. She believes in seeding that promotes healing, resiliency, and joy daily, with food and drink being the perfect vehicle. Her days are steeped in transforming seeds into plants and plants into warming teas, hearty medicines, and delicious dishes.

Sage’s Larder was born of a desire to change Jovans’ relationship to, and enjoyment of, food in a deeper way, to recreate those joys by learning how from the inside out. Every-continued on next page
Erin Olivari Crafts Vegan Cheese
By Dawn Paiva, (Hawaii)

Erin Olivari
The Vegan Cheese Shoppe
Honolulu, Hawaii
www.thevegancheeseshoppe.com

After years spent working in fine-dining establishments, surrounded by high-end gourmet ingredients, Erin Olivari found herself more interested in promoting healthier food options. The Food Studies program at New York University allowed her to combine her passions for food, culture, nutrition, and hospitality and led to her realization that a plant-based diet could play an important role in improving the health of people and the environment. But, she says, “As I became increasingly dedicated to a plant-based diet, I was disappointed by the vegan cheese options available.”

Upon moving to Hawaii in 2015, armed with a Master of Arts in Food Studies, Erin discovered that locally grown macadamia nuts could be the key to providing better vegan options. She created The Vegan Cheese Shoppe in 2016 and spent the next year perfecting recipes. Matching the texture and mouth feel of traditional dairy-based cheese was a goal for her, and tree nuts contain a similar fat, protein, and carbohydrate mix as animal milk.

“Macadamia nuts have a rich, buttery flavor that is very like traditional Brie, plus they’re a nutritional powerhouse,” she observes. “You can combine the mac nuts with other tree nuts to create different tastes and textures. My goal was to create a product that would pay homage to traditional cheese by using only a few key ingredients and letting the subtle flavor of the nuts shine through.”

Her first signed account was with a local chain, Down to Earth, which specializes in vegetarian and vegan products. Over the past three years, Erin has expanded into other retailers in Hawaii and California, as well as online sales through Amazon and her own e-commerce shop.

“The Vegan Cheese Shoppe’s flagship cheese is Macadamia Nut “Brie,” a creamy, spreadable, rindless Brie alternative. “It’s best enjoyed on a cheese plate with crackers or a baguette,” Erin suggests. “But you can use it in so many ways, from stuffed mushrooms to spinach and artichoke dip.” Erin also offers Cashew and Macadamia Grated “Parm” (ideal for pasta or in pesto) and a dairy-, gluten- and soy-free product called Better Than Bread Crumbs, which adds texture and flavor (as well as plant-based protein) to any dish that could benefit from a bit of savory crunch.

As the market for animal-free products grows, Erin sees more opportunities. “I forecast that vegan cheese will be marketed right next to animal-milk cheese, in the same way that we’ve seen tremendous growth in the varieties of milk-type products offered in the grocery store,” she says. “Our challenge is that tree nuts are expensive, and because of government subsidies, animal-milk cheese is much cheaper than quality vegan cheese. It’s a shame, but luckily there are people who are willing to pay for a sustainable, cruelty-free—and of course, delicious!—alternative cheese product.”

Other business challenges Erin faces are balancing the demands of production against marketing and marketing on a very limited budget. “I joined Les Dames to network with like-minded, successful women in the food world, and I could not ask for more support from the Hawai‘i chapter and the organization as a whole,” she says.

Her Dame colleagues have already helped her to bring more awareness to her company. Co-presidents Jenn Marr and Kristin Jackson arranged, hosted, and filmed a product demonstration and tutorial with Erin and Angel Foster, owner of Island Olive Oil Company, and Vegan Cheese Shoppe products are now available at both Island Olive Oil locations, in Honolulu and Kailua.

Dames receive a 10% discount on products from The Vegan Cheese Shoppe’s website, www.thevegancheeseshoppe.com, using code DAMES. You can also find Erin’s vegan cheese on Amazon.com.

Dawn Paiva is Sole Proprietor, Put It On My Plate

Deborah O’Kelly Crafts the Best-tasting Artisan Granola in New England
By CiCi Williamson (Washington, D.C.)

Deborah O’Kelly (New England)
Golden Girl Granola
Shirley, Massachusetts
www.goldengirlgranola.com

Bearing a logo drawn by her daughter Jacquie, inspired by Pippi Longstocking, Golden Girl Granola began 13 years ago as a product sold at the Carlisle, Massachusetts, farmers market. It’s now sold in supermarkets and specialty stores in New England and online.
Deborah Stone Crafts
Pickles, Jams, Cheeses, and More

By Martha Johnston (Birmingham)

Deborah Stone
Stone Hollow Farmstead
Harpersville, Alabama
www.stonehollowfarmstead.com

When entrepreneur Deborah Stone sold her Day Spa in 1999, she immediately began looking for land. She wanted to go back to the farm. So with her husband, Russell, and daughters, Fallon and Alexandra, Deborah founded Stone Hollow Farmstead. The farm has grown into a business that now includes Farmstead Laboratories and FarmStand by Stone Hollow Farmstead, as well.

Today, Deborah’s life is filled with the same love of farm, food, and work that her parents taught her. As a child, she learned to preserve foods and to grow vegetables and flowers. These skills, coupled with a passion for clean food, her innate creativity and business acumen, drove the evolution of Stone Hollow. It’s just done on a commercial scale now.

In addition to the 100-member CSA and the goat dairy, Deborah grows close to 20 acres of vegetables, flowers, berries, figs, and herbs. Crops are grown year round, so all are busy planting, harvesting, cooking, pasteurizing, cheese-making, preserving, developing recipes, ordering, receiving, etc. The kitchen is always “on,” and visitors are jokingly told not to go in the kitchen or they might get pickled.

The biggest challenges for Stone Hollow Farmstead have been wholesale and retail online sales. After taking a line of food in jars to the Atlanta Gift Market in 2018, Deborah’s business began to grow rapidly. Then Food 52 brought Stone Hollow into its online store. Especially important during the pandemic, these markets developed online platforms for customers to buy safely, and Deborah and her team are now set up for that. Stone Hollow has become more streamlined in managing shipping and has expanded production schedules, but staffing is still a challenge.

Stone Hollow Farmstead produces lots of foods in jars: pickles, jams, jellies, marmalades, conserves. Her creative condiments, including a beautiful Rose Geranium Jelly, made a recent Food & Wine list of “Best Mail-Order Food Gifts from Every State.” They have goat and cow cheeses including award-winning Fresh Chevre with Chive Blossoms and Goat Milk Feta. A line of Bloody Mary mixes, Champagne Pickled Okra, and Pickled Peaches are customer favorites.

In addition to selling products at her own two retail stores, Deborah sells locally at farmers markets, on her website, and online on platforms such as Faire. Greenwise Markets also carry her products. When asked why she joined the LDEI Birmingham chapter, Deborah replied it was to collaborate with and celebrate women in food. She appreciates the support and security of knowing that she has other women in similar businesses who “get it” and welcome the sharing of ideas.

Deborah is quick to say LDEI membership is absolutely an asset in promoting Stone Hollow Farmstead. “The Birmingham chapter hosts a number of local events that have created new sales outlets, hiring people who work well together, and increasing volume and efficiency while keeping spending down.

Several members of the New England Chapter knew Deborah and invited her to become a Dame. “I really loved meeting women who had similar interests. Being in Les Dames has been both personally gratifying and inspiring. It’s always fun to see members’ products in new stores; to know what an accomplishment it is for them to have their product in a particular store; and to have personally met them,” she said enthusiastically.

CiCi Williamson is an author, food and travel writer, and editor of the spring and fall LDEI Quarterly.
Rhonda Kave: Chocolatier, Activist, Inspiration
By Kathleen Squires (New York)

Rhonda Kave
Roni-Sue’s Chocolates
New York City
www.roni-sue.com

Rhonda Kave learned about the power of the pivot well before it became the signature survival tactic of 2020. In fact, 13 years ago, it was her willingness to adapt that inspired her to fashion a decades-long hobby into the small business of her dreams.

In 2007, Rhonda was a social worker at the Coalition Against Domestic Violence, pursuing a Bachelors degree in sociology at night at New York University. Her final senior project prompted her to visit the original Essex Street Market on the Lower East Side of Manhattan where she came upon a tiny space—literally a storage closet—for rent. An avid chocolate maker, she envisioned it as a “delightful little chocolate shop.” She rented it and the Roni-Sue’s Chocolate brand was born.

Roni-Sue’s made its name on “unique and ethically sourced” chocolates, such as her “Cocktail Collection” of boozy truffles, and spicy “Chile Lovers Collection.” She expanded her repertoire to caramel corn, lollipops, butter-crunch toffee, pretzels, and chocolate-covered bacon.

“Mainstream isn’t my lane,” she says of her products out on the shelves at all times. So, today we have two standard core products, a very small batch in a single barrel.”

The whiskeys produced to date are all ryes. They are sourced from MGP Distillery in Lawrenceburg, Indiana, just over the Ohio border near Cincinnati. In less than two years, Buzzard’s Roost ryes have received both gold medals at the prestigious San Francisco Spirits Competition and have been named one of the “15 Best New Whiskeys of 2020” by Paste Magazine.

She and Brauner worked with Independent Stave cooperage to get four different customized, proprietary barrels which differ in toast and char levels. Since some 70% of the flavor of whiskey comes from the barrel, this is a major part of whiskey production.

Judith said, “I joined Les Dames originally because it was philanthropic. I’ve always been involved in charity or arts organizations, and so I was looking for those that I wanted to participate in. I love being representative of the industry that I spent 20 years in and being philanthropic.”

Les Dames d’Escoffier International
sometimes quirky flavor profiles, relying on "good cacao well-fermented, well-roasted, and well-conched." To ensure high-quality, Rhonda co-founded MOHO Chocolate, based in Belize, in the interest of creating a "single-origin, direct trade couverture" to use in her confections.

"Traveling to Belize to meet with farmers and local chocolate makers really gave me a deeper understanding of cacao, chocolate, and what it means to make and eat the real stuff," she says. In her popular chocolate classes, "I let folks know the difference between 'big chocolate,' and craft chocolate makers, especially as concerns child labor and child slavery, in the commodity cocoa system in West Africa, the source of two-thirds of the world's cocoa supply."

A strong advocate for women, Rhonda continues to support domestic-violence prevention and intervention initiatives, and this year she has worked with Sakhi for South Asian Women, a survivor-led movement for gender justice and violence survivors. She also donated 20% of online sales in June to The Okra Project for the Black Lives Matter movement and in support of Black trans women.

Her "women helping women" ethos is what propelled Rhonda to join the New York Chapter of LDEI. As a Dame, she enjoys collaborating with other Dame-owned businesses and working on the Green Tables Committee. Her best advice for Dames starting a business: "Be very sure you're ready for the stress and sleepless nights. Starting your own business isn't easy. In retrospect, I think it would also have been good to find a partner whose skill set complemented my own. Having someone to share the load, the successes and the set-backs is important."

Of course, 2020 presented its own set of challenges for Rhonda. In 2019, Essex Market moved to a brand new location. Business was booming: she sold out for Christmas and Valentine's Day, her classes were booked solid, and she grew her customer base by 60%. Then came the pandemic, which forced her to close her retail stall, but Rhonda successfully pivoted her classes to a virtual format, and in January, she launched a new website and social media campaign. Roni-Sue's confections are now available on her website, at small businesses, and Chelsea Market Baskets, and via igourmet.com.

Kathleen Squires is a food and travel writer who won a first prize in LDEI's 2016 M.F.K. Fisher Award.

Sugars and Spices and Everything Nice
By Cynthia Graubart (Atlanta)

Suzi Sheffield
Beautiful Briny Sea
Atlanta, Georgia
www.beautifulbrinysea.com

That's what Suzi Sheffield (Atlanta) is made of. That, and a big scoop of fearlessness. Always industrious, Suzi has been working since she was 10 years old. Babysitting, waiting tables, catering, and then starting her own restaurant, she isn't afraid of hard work. After 17 years at the helm of her own restaurant in Columbia, South Carolina, she returned home to Atlanta to be closer to her family and her sweetheart. She knew she didn't want to continue in the restaurant industry with its constant chaos, but she could never leave the food community—the farmers, chefs, and local food initiatives—that she loved so much.

Suzi, a self-taught cook, took her love of the land and the people who cultivate it and formed the dry goods company Beautiful Briny Sea in 2011. Nearly 10 years later, it is a thriving business with an array of products including irresistible savory salt blends like French Picnic (sea salt with Dijon mustard, garlic, and Herbes de Provence) and Magic Unicorn (sea salt with smoked paprika, garlic, rosemary, and celery seed).

She also created dazzling sugars with ethereal and catchy names like Pocket Full of Starlight (a vanilla sugar) and Mr. Gigglepants (hibiscus and citrus scented sugar). Sold online and in retailers like Whole Foods and Williams Sonoma, her product line includes 20 different blends, each available individually or sold in carefully crafted mixed sets. She sees this business as a full-circle journey from serving hungry students, families, and young professionals who didn't have time to cook, to making pinches of pizzaz to brighten up home cooked meals.

Big decisions—and big lessons—come from growth, so it's a constant push and pull for whether or not to stay a small mom-and-pop shop, or swim with the sharks in deeper, darker, and potentially more profitable waters. Diving into the restaurant industry, Suzi had no capital or business plan, but she had the realization after college that she wanted to work only for herself. Growing and scaling this business is top of mind constantly. Shifting between the scenarios of bigger debt for bigger markets, or slower, sustained growth is a delicate balancing act. Learning the power of yes—and no—has kept her head out of the clouds and her mind clear on her mission of sustained growth.

Her private label blends in collaboration with William Sonoma, Kevin Gillespie's Gunshow, and Jeni's Ice Cream are exciting projects and Suzi is eager to do more—one step at a time.

Becoming a Dame of the Atlanta Chapter in 2017 opened many doors for Suzi. “As an independent business owner, I feel like I have a built-in advisory board.” But most of all, it’s the connection with other women that she loves. “I’ve made lifelong friends here in the Atlanta Chapter and around the world.”

Her business partnerships with LDEI have been rewarding and always result in increased exposure and sales, whether it’s sponsoring conference or participating in a giveaway. “No matter if I’m struggling, celebrating, or questioning, Dames are right by my side.”

The best benefit, Suzi says, is that LDEI is a platform for service, with the opportunity to raise funds, and mentor young women. “It is the crux of who we are and what we do.”

Cynthia Graubart is a food writer and co-author of Mastering the Art of Southern Cooking.
Ellie’s Dairy: Nursery Rhymes to Cheese Rinds
By Julia Platt Leonard (London)

Debbie Vernon
Ellie’s Dairy
Faversham, Kent, England
www.elliesdairy.co.uk

We have Auntie Flo and the nursery rhyme “Paddy McGinty’s Goat” to thank for Debbie Vernon becoming an artisan producer of goat’s milk in the United Kingdom. They also have a range of fresh, ripened and hard cheeses and premium-quality kid meat. But it’s not just what they produce that sets them apart but HOW they do it. “Capturing a niche market is always a challenge but we are not your average commercial goat herd,” Debbie says. “We allow our goats to graze, we breed only seasonally, and we do not cull ‘unproductive’ or elderly goats but allow them to retire within the herd,” she adds. They even name each goat, and you can read their “bios” on the Ellie’s Dairy website (the dairy is in fact named after one of their original goats).

“Our ethos has always been to produce a smaller amount of very high quality milk from a herd that is full of happy, contented and healthy animals,” she says. They supply small delis and farm shops and provide some local doorstep delivery, but they rely mainly on farmers markets, which is where Vernon met the London Chapter’s President, Jacqui Pickles.

Jacqui had been a customer and strong supporter for a long time when she invited Vernon to join the chapter. “I was unsure what I could possibly offer such an elite band of ladies, so it was only recently that I accepted the challenge!” Vernon says. While chapter contact has been limited this year, Vernon says she’s enjoyed the events she has attended. And as much as she’s looking to gain from LDEI, she’s also eager to contribute. “I look forward to working with Les Dames over the coming years and hopefully use my experience as a farmer and primary food producer to mentor and educate others.”

In a world where factory farming is all too often the norm, Ellie’s Dairy is an example of how farming can and should be done. We owe a debt of gratitude to Auntie Flo…and of course to Paddy McGinty.

Julia Platt Leonard is a writer and marketing and food consultant and the host of the Divertimenti Culinary Salon in London

Pam Powell IS the Salad Girl!
By Cindy Jergensen (Minnesota)

Pam Powell
Salad Girl
Willernie, Minnesota
www.saladgirl.com

Successful for years in the painting/decorating industry, Pam Powell (Minnesota) and husband Jim created a unique organic-foods catering company, Obscene Cuisine. Pam used local and seasonal ingredients to design beautiful centerpiece salads with her spectacular vinaigrettes. Then, sadly, the 2007 recession hit. At age 50 they started Salad Girl, pivoting to pay bills while fulfilling Pam’s lifelong dream of bringing fresh, organic dressings to the marketplace.

The Powells began selling at farmers markets and co-ops, including the boutique Mill City Market near Minneapolis’ Guthrie Theater, naming their company “Salad Girl” in homage to Pam’s first and favorite job in the food industry. As a teen she was the “Salad Girl” at a Northern Minnesota resort. Her favorite part? Crafting salads and house-made dressings from delicious, fresh ingredients.

During and after art school, Pam was a freelance artist while she continued working all aspects of restaurants and kitchens: cook, saucier, hostess, waitress, bartender, and banquet and private chef for a wealthy household.

Still painting and decorating, Pam and Jim painted an Italian frieze for the owners of a local grocery chain, Kowalski’s Markets. When Pam mentioned her dream to the Kowalski’s of bringing delicious, fresh, organic...
Claire Meneely Bakes the Best Baguettes in Nashville

By Nancy Vienneau (Nashville)

Claire Meneely
DOZEN

Nashville, Tennessee
www.dozen-nashville.com

Claire Meneely, owner of DOZEN bakery and café in Nashville, can trace her love of baking back to childhood. Each year, she would help her mom prepare a fabulous spread of quiches, ham-rolls, coconut cake, and hot cross buns for the family’s neighborhood Easter brunch. Throughout high school, Claire worked for a catering company, and she attended culinary school in San Francisco before enrolling at the University of California at Santa Cruz. A proud Banana Slug [UCSC’s mascot], she double-majored in Business and Environmental Studies. Her hands-on training came in two exceptional places: For 2 1/2 years, she was the kitchen manager for Bakesale Betty, Chez Panisse alum Alison Barakat’s business that got its start at a Bay Area farmers market. Claire honed her craft at several Parisian boulangeries, notably Bé-Sucré. There, she also discovered her love of baking bread.

When she returned from Paris to her hometown in the fall of 2009, Claire launched DOZEN, a pop-up bakery at the Nashville Farmers Market to sell her specialty cookies, made with local and organic ingredients. She also discovered her love of baking bread.

Claire joined the Nashville chapter in 2018. “This was a beautiful community effort,” she says. “I saw it as a great opportunity to connect with these amazing leaders in our community.”

Working with several Dames in September 2019, Claire organized and hosted Bakers United for Families to raise money for Immigrant Families Together. Over 35 bakers, pastry chefs, and restaurants citywide participated. In less than 2 hours, the event sold out, garnering donations in excess of $6000. “This was a beautiful community effort,” Claire says. “COVID cut into our ability to do anything like this in 2020, but we are committed to doing so again, once it is safe.”

Nancy Vienneau is the restaurant critic for The Tennessean newspaper and a freelance writer.
Cordia Harrington Says, "Success Takes Belief, Focus, Risk, Passion"

Would you borrow $13.5 million to create a company? Cordia Harrington (Nashville) did in 1996. With the loan, she created the Tennessee Bun Company, which is today one of the fastest automated bakeries in the world. It produces 1,000 buns a minute.

“If you really believe in what you are doing, and you believe it will benefit other people, then you’ll be successful. Just be totally enthusiastic about it. Stay focused. Stay passionate,” advises Cordia. “It’s really important is to try and understand your customer. Pick a customer you believe in. A lot of times when people are starting out, they know who their focused customer is. If they can understand what that customer’s needs are, then that will lead to success as well.”

The English muffins on an Egg McMuffin at McDonald’s? Her company makes them as well as those buttery rolls at O’Charley’s and KFC’s biscuits. Her companies’ clients also include Perkins, Pepperidge Farm, and Sheetz. KFC’s biscuits. Her companies’ clients also include Perkins, Pepperidge Farm, and Sheetz. Her companies’ clients also include Perkins, Pepperidge Farm, and Sheetz.

A realtor and single mom of three sons, she bought a McDonald’s franchise in Illinois. Its low sales led her to purchase a Greyhound bus franchise and changed its routes to run past her restaurant. It worked. “In the winter, we averaged 68 buses a day, and in the summer, over 100 buses a day—all stopping for food,” she revealed. Learning that McDonald’s needed a bun supplier, she fought like mad to become the supplier, even though her résumé included no bakery experience.

“There are going to be tons of naysayers who will tell us not to take risks. They’ll tell us to keep the comfortable job where there is income and insurance. But if you believe in something, then you should go for it. The real key is that you have to have passion and enthusiasm for the product or project you are going to sell,” Cordia affirms. “There’s plenty of money available. Money isn’t as important as having the focus, the passion and the real belief that this is something good.”

Are there challenges? “Oh, my gosh, yes,” said Cordia. “It’s never easy. Your job title should not be CEO; it should be Chief Troubleshooting Person on the Planet. I can give you story after story after story where I thought, ‘Well, this is the end, and I am watching myself going down the tubes.’”

People call Cordia Harrington “The Bun Lady” and not just behind her back. She’s quite fond of the nickname, even strapping on a plastic derriere sometimes during speaking engagements—mainly because buns have made her a millionaire.

In addition to the Tennessee Bun Company (TBC), now she also owns the Nashville Bun Company, Cold Storage of Nashville, and CornerStone Baking Company. In 2014, Cordia purchased an artisan facility, Masada, in Atlanta. This artisan bakery has an organic line, bagel line, bun and bread line, and Danish pastry line, delivering fresh product to over 1,400 customers in seven states in the southeastern U.S. She transports her products frozen in shipping containers to Caribbean islands and Suriname in South America.

During 2020, TBC built a new state-of-the-art croissant line in Nashville, and purchased Shecht Bakeries in Sioux City, Iowa, and Smyrna, Georgia, doubling capacity to serve customers. In February 2021, the company changed its name to Crown Bakeries, “Where the customer is King.”

Cordia is a believer in not giving up. She said, “I firmly believe that we don’t learn as much from our good experiences as we do from our challenges. So when I look back on my life, I see the really rough times and how I had to do things differently, and through that came success.

“Look long term and embrace whatever challenge you are going through. In the end, you will learn more and be a better person from it. And I would say to anybody who has a business that they need to have some friend who is at the same level, so when they do feel like they are facing an insurmountable problem, they have someone to talk to. That will give them emotional support as well as some sage advice.”

Should Dames start a new business during challenging times? “If you look at history, there have been 17 recessions and 17 recoveries. We are on our way to recovery right now from our current challenge. When I look back at my real estate business, my McDonald’s franchise, my Greyhound bus franchise, the bakery—I started all of those during an economic dip. So I believe that a recession is the right time to start a business because there are needs. There aren’t as many cushy jobs. There are a lot of customers out there who are in chaos and are willing to change their buying patterns because of what they’ve just gone through. So it’s a wonderful time to offer a new service or product.”

—CiCi Williamson (Washington, D.C.)
By Karen Haram (San Antonio)

It’s no brag to say that things are bigger and brighter in the Lone Star State. Let us prove it at our fall 2021 LDEI conference, “UNESCO, Creative City with a Mission, A Fiesta of Flavors.”

Conference co-chairs Blanca Aldaco and Nancy Fitch and the San Antonio Chapter, a group of 80-plus dynamic women, are pulling out all the stops for this year’s conference, starting with a boat ride on the world-famous San Antonio River that will take you to the Arneson River Theater. There, a group of all-women mariachis will play as you disembark your boat and are handed a margarita and a flower crown to wear.

This introduction to Texas hospitality sets the stage for a profusion of colorfully decorated food booths featuring flavors that make up San Antonio’s unforgettable gastronomy. Craving a taco and margarita? We’ve got it. Have a hankering for barbecue? Check. Anxious to taste the Asian influence on Texas cuisine? We’ve got you covered.

We’ll be based at the Hotel Contessa right on the River Walk where you are steps away from a festival of flavors that make our city one of the top destination spots in the country. And, history buffs, you will be just a few short blocks away from the Cradle of Texas liberty, the Alamo.

Texas food, drink and speakers will abound throughout the conference. Whether you want to learn to make tamales, craft the perfect margarita, or discover how native Mexican plants can promote healing, you will find it here.

October weather in the Alamo City is about as perfect as weather gets, so order your sunscreen, brush up on your line-dancing, and get ready to join us for a party that attendees will be talking about for years to come. See you October 14-17, 2021, in San Antonio!
Dickel bourbon) cocktail with enough for two servings each that were premixed and bottled. We also sold specialty items and Dame-led experiences such as virtual cooking classes, wine tastings, books, and other foods, much like our previous in-person silent auctions.

Another moneymaker was a raffle for a chance to win two restaurant packages worth $1,200. The $25 tickets were also sold online at http://ldeibirmingham.org/. For these packages, we gathered 24 $100 gift certificates to some of Birmingham’s most beloved restaurants and created two different raffles. One was for 12 family-friendly places, and the other was 12 date-night restaurants. We called the two winners and hand delivered the envelopes with all their hard-copy certificates.

On October 18, the day of the picnic-basket pickup, 68 Dames (nearly our entire membership) showed up with masks on, ready to work. Each patron who drove through our line of tents was greeted by enthusiastic Dames and thanked over and over. Although our smiles were hidden beneath our “Merci, Y’all!” masks, our customers were ecstatic.

Chapter President Kathy G. Mezrano said, “Words can hardly express the gratitude and joy of seeing nearly our entire chapter make our Southern Soiree 2020, ‘Champagne & Fried Chicken,’ such an amazing success! I couldn’t be more proud to see our members—charter members as well as our newest Dames—working side by side producing one of our most memorable fundraisers to date!

“Combining sponsorships, basket sales, raffles, cocktail kits, and other various items, we more than exceeded our goal, even during COVID, and I think we all had fun doing it!”

The profits from our October 18 event, chaired by Kathy G., Kay Bruno Reed, and Barbara Gaines Kenyon, ensured that our scholarship and grant giving can continue uninterrupted. We also have funds for our general operating budget as well as money to put toward building a future endowment.

By Susan Swagler (Birmingham)

When faced with a global pandemic that made our annual in-person fundraiser impossible to pull off, our Birmingham Chapter didn’t back down. Instead, we came together and reimagined our event in a way that was safe, fun, and profitable. Amazingly, the virtual event netted over $61,000; that was more than last year’s in-person fundraiser.

“Champagne & Fried Chicken,” a drive-through, pick-up picnic basket dinner, featured delicious food and wonderful beverages. The baskets cost $150 each and fed two people. We sold 210 picnic baskets—mostly the fried chicken basket but a few vegetarian ones, too. They came complete with lovely oversized cloth napkins and handsome plastic glasses for the bubbly. We included a link to a Spotify playlist for dinner tunes.

We also sold cocktail kits made by two brand-new Dames who own two of Birmingham’s hottest cocktail bars. These cost $25: a white liquor (Cathead vodka), and a dark liquor (George Dickel bourbon) cocktail with enough for two servings each that were premixed and bottled. We also sold specialty items and Dame-led experiences such as virtual cooking classes, wine tastings, books, and other foods, much like our previous in-person silent auctions.

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The menu, coordinated by chair Kathy G Mezrano and co-chair, Dame Kay Reed, IZ Café and IZ Weddings & Events, included:

- **Southern Fried Chicken**
- **New Potato Salad with Shallot Vinaigrette and Fresh Herbs**, prepared by Kathy G Mezrano of Kathy G & Co.
- **Kale Salad with Snow’s Bend Organic Fall Vegetables and Dried Fruits**, prepared by Ashley McMakin of Ashley Mac’s using produce from Margaret Ann Snow of Snow’s Bend Farm
- **Corn Muffins**, prepared by Brittany Cheatham, pastry chef of Satterfield’s Restaurant
- **Biscuits**, prepared by Jennifer Yarbrough of Crestline Bagel Co.
- **Fresh pear and cheese French Sable Cookies**, prepared by Becky Satterfield of Satterfield’s Restaurant and El ZunZun
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fundraising

Des Moines

Wine, Pie & Hope: A Pandemic Pivot to Pie Pays Off

By Nichole Aksamit, President (Des Moines)

In a dark year, a little light can go a long way. And the Greater Des Moines Chapter shined especially bright in 2020.

Early in the pandemic, our chapter cut dues, switched to virtual meetings, put in-person programs on hold, and canceled what was to have been the year’s big fundraiser—an event tied to the also-cancelled Iowa State Fair. When our new board took office in July, we had eight new members but no fundraiser and little programming on the books.

The Birmingham Chapter’s plan for a grab-and-go picnic basket, however, inspired us to find a way to raise money in a safe and contactless way. And by late August, after a derecho hit Des Moines and further devastated the region, a small task force of our Dames (#TeamPie) had fleshed out a plan for our most successful fundraiser to date: the Wine & Pie Drive-By.

The idea was simple: We would make and offer 150 frozen-pie-and-wine packages at $60 each online for contactless pickup the weekend before Thanksgiving. We would use rescued local fruit for the pie filling. We would give proceeds to hard-hit local food banks and food rescue organizations while also raising funds for our first culinary scholarships. And we would turn the work leading up to the November 21 event into safe and socially distanced programs for Dames. These included apple and pear gleaning outings, individual fruit prep sessions, a virtual pie dough class that got 20 Dames working separately (but together in spirit) to make 200 pie crusts, and socially distanced pie-assembly and packaging shifts.

Each of our apple crumb, apple lattice, pear-cardamom lattice, and pour-and-bake pumpkin pies was frozen in a metal pie plate, prettily boxed with baking instructions, and paired with a bottle of food-friendly pinot noir. We also offered custom fabric face masks for $10 each.

In the end: We had a sellout, with over $10,000 in sales and donations and just over $7,000 in proceeds after expenses. That allowed us to give $1,750 to the Food Bank of Iowa (our largest network of local food banks), $1,750 to Eat Greater Des Moines (a local food rescue/sustainable foodways nonprofit), and $3,500 to our new LDEI “Give a Girl a Knife” scholarships.

What’s more, we engaged our community and our members with our core mission to feed our community, support sustainable local food systems, and uplift the next generation of female food leaders. Patrons, thrilled with the pies, shared love on social media and asked us to make Wine & Pie a recurring event. And despite personal and professional hardships, nearly all of our 41 members contributed time, talent, or resources to this effort.

The chapter is thankful for its Wine & Pie task force (aka #TeamPie: Nichole Aksamit, Sue Hoss, Kendra Daly, Juli Hale, and Lana Shope), who roughed out and guided the plan even after a devastating derecho (land hurricane) hit Iowa in August—as well as for everyone who picked, peeled, sliced, kneaded, rolled, sourced, designed, wrapped, staffed, promoted, or purchased something for this event. Most of the Greater Des Moines Chapter’s 41 members helped with the fundraiser. The chapter was founded in 2016.

Two pick-up points were established—one downtown and one in the suburbs—at businesses owned by Dames. Pick-up points were Pierpont’s at Union Station, owned by Mary Holland, and The Olive Tree, owned by Mindy Riley. Patrons pulled up in front of their selected pick-up location between 5:00 and 6:30 p.m. Dames approached the cars with masks on, ready to load their dinner kits and bottles of wine directly into the back seat of each vehicle.

As a final touch, a separate Spotify link was printed on the menu and emailed to each patron so they could listen to a custom playlist of Kansas City Jazz legends to enjoy with their dinner.

After $3,100 in expenses, the Kansas City chapter netted $10,000 that will be used to fund our scholarship program for 2021. The chapter’s philanthropy chair, Mary Holland, who intended to chair the 2020 in-person SupperClub, generously changed over to chair the curbside event and did most of the heavy lifting for it as well. Others helping to pull the event together were: Chapter President Kathy Denis, Vice President Jenny Vergara, Secretary Lindsay Howerton, Treasurer Mary Meade Eastman, Programs Chair Cheryl Hartell, Programs-Elect Kimrey Kent, Communications Chair Chris Becicka, Nominating Chair Mindy Riley, Chilton Dodson, Mary Holland, Kimrey Kent, and Louise Meyers.

Kansas City Dames who prepared the meal kits we sold were: Chef Shanita McAfee-Bryant, Chef Celina Tio, Chef Jane Zieha, Amanda Angles, Chef Megan Garrelts, Chef Jessica Armstrong, and Cindy Reynolds.

By Jenny Vergara (Kansas City)

Due to the pandemic, the Kansas City Chapter had to cancel our annual in-person fundraising dinner gala, Les Dames d’Escoffier SupperClub. However, we recreated our event by turning it into a curbside dinner that patrons could pick up and enjoy from the comfort of their own homes. Historically, the event combines live jazz with a six-course wine dinner. It is the biggest fundraiser each year for our 54-person chapter. All proceeds benefit our Education Fund that creates scholarships for women studying the culinary arts.

On October 9, our Dames, along with Kansas City’s stellar food and drink scene, donated their time and talents to prepare and package a memorable SupperClub dinner kit for two. The bag included a six-course menu, a bottled cocktail, a bottle of locally made limoncello, and a bottle of wine, all for the cost of $200.

Kansas City Translated their Annual In-Person SupperClub to a Successful Curbside Fundraiser

By Jenny Vergara (Kansas City)

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How to Host a Virtual Village Feast

By Debbie Arrington (Sacramento)

How do you convert a farm-to-fork harvest dinner into a virtual fundraiser without losing its sense of community—and financial support?

That was the pandemic-related dilemma facing the Sacramento Chapter. The solution? A virtual version of its popular Village Feast. Via Zoom on October 17, the chapter successfully hosted the event online and raised more than $14,000 for scholarships. What was amazing: our chapter actually netted MORE from the virtual Feast.

Admission tickets for the in-person feast (usually costing $95 each including dinner and wine) were free for the virtual event. But patrons needed to make reservations via Eventbrite. That gave them access to links to order food as well as do-it-yourself dinner kits with recipes.

“Once we identified our path, which started with envisioning how we could recreate—in a virtual setting—the sense of community and the tradition of breaking bread together. We had to find other key pieces that would make the event a success,” said co-chair Rachael Levine. “Co-chair Elise Bauer researched and found the Austria (the auction platform) and set about learning how to build out our website. Once that fell into place, we set fundraising goals, began soliciting items for the silent auction, created a marketing plan, and—most importantly—worked on partnering with members of our farm and restaurant communities and retail wine programs to create a variety of meal options for attendees to enjoy at home.”

Meghan Russell, executive director of Davis Farm to School, was a co-chairperson of the event. Split between LDEI Sacramento’s scholarship program and Davis Farm to School, net proceeds of about $30,000 exceeded the Feast’s goal by $5,000. Rachael said, “Our chapter did a lot of networking via our Facebook page and email blasts. Rachael demonstrated how to have a stay-at-home Feast party on a local morning TV show, “Good Day, Sacramento.” Ann M. Evans wrote about the event and offered recipes to make a farm-to-fork feast at home in one local newspaper, the Davis Enterprise. More articles appeared in other local newspapers and magazines.

Dames and supporters contributed dozens of fun, appetizing, and inspiring auction items. Georgeanne Brennan was particularly generous. Besides writing recipes for the meal kits, she donated two weeks at her country home in Provence.

“Some of the most popular items in the auction were the ‘Experiences’ donated by LDEI Sacramento members,” said Chapter President Joni Stuart. That included a “Sommelier Smack Down” featuring Stuart versus Elizabeth-Rose Mandalou; a backyard luau with Hawaii-inspired food and tiki drinks; and a craft cocktail class taught by Molly Hawks featuring favorites from her Hawks Public House.

Event co-chair Rachael Levine said, “Ann M. Evans was the creative mind behind the collaboration with Farm Fresh To You writing recipes and offering Village Feast themed aperitif and ingredient boxes and the foundational menu our restaurant partners modeled for the to-go menus. Success came from the help of farm and restaurant partners, and of course, the many Dames who donated their services to create amazing, unique silent auction items which were the driving force behind the success of our fundraising.”

Hawks, along with Carol Barsotti and Liz Mishler, offered the portable Feast food. Menu-wise, the Feast switched from grilled lamb and trip-tip beef to chicken, which can be more easily reheated at home.

Said Rachael, “I’m most proud of our steering committee’s ability to pivot during these trying times and create a wildly successful event that brought our community together.”

Long-time Village Feast patrons Laurie Adams, Dorsey Griffith, Lauren Peters, and Dame Vicki Revak. Take-home Village Feast dinner. Photo: Carrie Boyle
By Erin Byers Murray (Nashville), LDEI 2nd Vice President

By now the International Board of Les Dames d’Escoffier is well versed in Zoom call etiquette. In January, while it was snowy and cold in the North, but temperate and sunny in San Antonio, the group met for a long Saturday afternoon online. The entire board was in attendance: Judith Hollis-Jones (Kentucky), Deborah Mintcheff (New York), Erin Byers Murray (Nashville), Liz Barrett (Chicago), Stephanie Jaeger (British Columbia), Barb Pires (Atlanta), Kathy Shearer (San Antonio), Bonnie Tandy-LeBlang (New York), Ingrid Gangestad (South Florida), Bev Shaffer (Cleveland), and executive director Greg Jewell.

The meeting kicked off on a high note with a presentation about the 2021 International Conference set to take place in San Antonio, October 14 through 17. Co-chairs Nancy Fitch and Blanca Aldaco joined, bringing their Texas warmth and hospitality to the meeting as they discussed this year’s vision and theme: Creative City with a Mission, UNESCO, and A Fiesta of Flavors. From breakout sessions focused on agriculture/gardening, food/food history, healing, and business development, to tours showing off San Antonio’s rich culture and foodways, the conference will be full of fascinating take-aways. One evening, a Fiesta of Flavors event will introduce Dames to river boats, female mariachis, and margaritas, of course! We’ll be celebrating our inaugural Woman of Purpose award winner, as well as our 2020 Grande Dame, Carolyn Wente. The Board was impressed and excited to hear about all of the San Antonio chapter’s ideas. (See page 13.)

We then moved onto a lively discussion about the Member Modernization Task Force’s proposed membership policy updates. The topic has been discussed at previous board meetings and this discussion was meant to fine tune the membership categories, as well as the documents of the proposed Membership Toolkit. Shortly after that conversation, we discussed amending a multi-chapter membership policy, which the Board voted unanimously to approve. We also discussed a chapter hiatus policy, which LDEI did not previously have in place. This newly created policy was voted on and approved unanimously as well.

LDEI Past President Bev Shaffer led the next order of business, which related to other Task Force recommendations. The Brand Strategy Task Force made recommendations that ranged from revitalizing logo continuity to creating a LDEI Brand Style Guide; the Board discussed and approved the adoption of a style guide for chapters, inclusion of the mission statement, and conformity of social media hashtags. From the Member Professional Development Task Force the Board received a very thorough list of professional development topics and sources. These are meant to offer continuing education to all Dames. The consensus of the Board was to post many of their findings on the LDEI website for easy access for all.

Under the topic of new project initiatives, LDEI 2nd Vice President Erin Byers Murray presented an update on the search for a new associate digital editor; the hiring process is ongoing. LDEI President Judith Hollis-Jones presented an update on Table Talks, the chapter-wide event scheduled for March. And Bev Shaffer gave us an overview of the M.F.K. Fisher Prize process, which recently launched and is ongoing.

After a treasurer’s report and approval of minutes, another highlight of the call came during a conversation about the LDEI Relief Fund. Following the most recent round of grant funds in the fall, the Board discussed continuing the fund in early 2021, and approved four $2,000 grants to be awarded early this year. Other topics included an overview of the LDEI website redesign project, as well as the report by LDEI Secretary Stephanie Jaeger that a potential chapter in Greece could have a charter request to the board later in the month. The board looked forward to learning more about this exciting development.

Visit and Donate Books to the LDEI Collection at The Boyd Library

By Liz Williams (New Orleans), Founder & Curator, and Sheila Crye CCP (Washington, D.C.), Chair, LDEI Collection Committee

Despite the pandemic, The John & Bonnie Boyd Hospitality & Culinary Library at the Southern Food & Beverage Museum is still operating by appointment, and people are using it—but in a new location. In 2020, the building originally housing the LDEI Collection was sold, and the books were moved to a new, larger space just a block away. It took about six weeks to move the collection. The boxing took several weeks and was done by volunteers who carefully kept things in order. A moving company moved the books, and our librarian and volunteers re-shelved the books, which took several more weeks.

We are proud and happy to house the Les Dames d’Escoffier International Collection, which is growing all the time with your help. Having a robust collection ensures that future users will know the scope of the culinary impact Dames have made. Please donate books that you have authored, books that you have styled, and books that you have photographed or otherwise illustrated. We are still working to ensure that copies of books by deceased Dames are also included.

SEARCH:
To see if a book is already housed in the collection, go to www.southernfood.org/sofab-culinary-library-and-archive, and click on “Browse the Book Collection.”

MAIL:
Please mail your books to the attention of Liz Williams, 1504 O.C. Haley Blvd., New Orleans, LA 70113. Media Mail shipping rates via the U.S. Postal Service are the cheapest. Use this calculator to estimate costs: www.ircalc.usps.com/. Donations are tax deductible to the full extent of the IRS laws. Find the fair market price for your used food and beverage books with an online retailer, such as Amazon.com.

VISIT:
Because of COVID restrictions, the library is open by appointment only on Monday, Thursday, and Friday. There are stalwart library users who make appointments and really use the library. To make an appointment to visit the collection, call 504-569-0405 or email liz@southernfood.org.

BUY:
There are also Cookbooks for Sale at www.sofab-institute.square.site/

Les Dames d’Escoffier: My Culinary Village

By Nancy Brussat (Chicago) (nbrussat@comcast.net)

Some things come along at just the right moment and an invitation to join Les Dames d’Escoffier was one of those things.

I had recently opened Convito, my Italian Food & Wine Market, so this organization of women leaders in the food, beverage and hospitality professions had a profound influence on my culinary journey. Many of the women I met through my association with Les Dames became my advisors, my teachers, my supporters, and friends.

As a bonus some even became cooking collaborators, travel companions, and dining partners. To this day I remain grateful for this unique organization of women that brought so much support, so much knowledge and so much joy into my life.

Buon Appetito!

Nancy Brussat blogs at www.nancy-brussat.wordpress.com/
St. Louis Green Tables Puts “Local Flavors in a Bag”

By Marilyn Freundlich and Mildred Mattfeldt-Beman PhD, RD, LD (St. Louis)

A joint project of the Green Tables and Fundraising Committees, “Local Flavors in a Bag” (LFB) netted $2,500 for the St. Louis Chapter’s student scholarships and community outreach grants. Designed to promote local businesses plus Missouri and Illinois farmers, the event featured seasonal ingredients in a gourmet meal kit for two. Costing $50 each, 65 bags were sold via www.ldeistl.org, and a raffle and wine pairing garnered additional profits.

The October 23 event was co-chaired by chapter Vice President Mildred Mattfeldt-Beman PhD, RD, Green Tables Chair Whitney Linsenmeyer PhD, RDN, and Fundraising Chair Darla Crask, the October 23 event.

Each bag contained all the ingredients needed to prepare an entire meal for two adults and spotlighted local and seasonal produce. The Bag included the ingredients for a salad, main dish (Pasta con Broccoli and Rosemary Garlic Chicken), Apple Crisp topped with Nitro Ice Cream plus two petite baguettes. Angie Eckert from Eckert’s Family Farms donated the apples for the crisp.

The meal kit was packed in an insulated LDEI St. Louis bag, along with a petit keepsake baking dish to be used for the dessert course. For an additional fee, wine pairings were also available featuring Missouri vineyards.

Dames made it a “Party for Two” putting those great ingredients together for a really good meal. It was a LOT of fun. This is the first time we have done something like this, cooking-wise.

We asked that the farmers deliver their produce to Saint Louis University (SLU); some were picked up by Dames. The bags were assembled in SLU’s Shared Use Kitchen by two Dames, two previous scholarship winners, and about 15 volunteers from the culinary class at SLU.

Tucked into each Bag were step-by-step instructions to prepare the meal, plus a link to a YouTube video tutorial with Dames demonstrating each course (www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z513YDjbD4).

Whitney Linsenmeyer introduced the video. Alyse Scaglione showed how to make the dessert; Jamie Daugherty, the main dish; and Alicia Blackwell-Calvert, the wine pairings. This video went out to all meal kit recipients so they could follow along.

Stories of the local farmers and vendors who made the dinner possible were shared. In addition, the chapter’s former scholarship winners assisted Dames in the video tutorial and packing the bags. Donated gifts from St. Louis businesses were raffled.

Bags could be picked up at one of three locations: Cecily Hoffius and Judith Bellos’ Ces and Judy Catering; Fresh Gatherings Café, or STL Food Works. For an extra fee, Dames would deliver a bag to the purchaser’s home.

For some added entertainment, a golden ticket was placed randomly in one of the bags, entitling the winner to free admission to our annual wine tasting fundraiser. The winners of the golden ticket wrote back, “Thank you for this lovely gift. We look forward to the next Les Dames event.”

To publicize the event, we used social media, mailing lists, and our website. We also asked the farmers to place it on their social media.

The event feedback was only positive, and the Green Tables Committee is now planning to repeat this fundraiser in May. Think Cinco de Mayo!
Thanks to Our Partners!

Our relationship with prestigious corporations in the food and beverage industries provides support for scholarship events, conferences, educational seminars, and more. Our current partners are listed below. Through our partnership program, prestigious corporations connect with, and help support, key women leaders of LDEI in the food, fine beverage and hospitality industries.

We welcome these and new partners for our San Antonio Conference. Please refer contacts to LDEI First Vice President Deborah Mintcheff (dsmintcheff@gmail.com or 917-923-6348).

Wente Family Estates
Gold Sponsor
Visit Website at: www.wentevineyards.com

YETI
Gold Sponsor
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Tito’s Handmade Vodka
Silver Sponsor
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Kerrygold
Bronze Sponsor
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Diversity Statement

Les Dames d’Escoffier International was born from the need to combat the exclusion of women from the male-dominated food, beverage, and hospitality industries—we were excluded from recognition and equity and this organization set out to change that. Since then, we have successfully focused on education, philanthropy, and support for other women and made our mark in our industries.

As current events have shown, we now have to do the work to be inclusive to ALL women in our mission. Therefore, in June 2020, the LDEI Board adopted the following Diversity Statement.

Diversity Statement and Commitment to Diversity

At Les Dames d’Escoffier International (“LDEI”), one of our guiding principles is valuing the differences among people and cultures throughout the world, in our communities and in our Chapters. We believe that the diversity of LDEI is a fundamental strength of our organization and that LDEI’s mission is best fulfilled when we embrace diversity as a value and a practice.

At LDEI we seek to build a community of women whose members and partners have diverse cultures, backgrounds and life experiences because we believe that diverse backgrounds and ideas are crucial to learning and excellence. In building a diverse and inclusive community, we welcome members and people of all races, language, ethnicity, cultural background, disability, sexual orientation and religion. We understand that people from different cultures and backgrounds provide unique perspectives and approaches.

Leading by example, we aspire to make diversity a core and abiding strength in our organization.

LDEI announces an exceptional educational opportunity that specifically addresses Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging in our industries. Registration opens April 15 and we recommend signing up quickly: The class is limited to 200 Dames, first come, first served. Turn to the back page of this publication for information and a full schedule.
Women in Agriculture

By CiCi Williamson (Washington, D.C.)

“2021 will be a breakout year for women in agriculture,” predicted Wade Barnes writing in AGDAILY. “The connected farm and modern technologies will empower more women to run farms and to take leadership positions in the industry. Today, brains—not brawn—are the new key to a farm’s success as technology closes the gender gap. In addition, because farm families are getting smaller, all farm kids are getting the same exposure and field experience. Technology makes that old notion of only boys in the field a thing of the past. It’s truly exciting to see this shift taking place, and I believe 2021 will be a breakout year for women in the industry.”

I asked Dames who own farms to share with the Quarterly their opinions on trends in agriculture. Here is what those who responded voiced.

Sandra Miller (Washington, D.C.), Owner/Farmer, Painted Hand Farm in Mount Holly Springs, Pennsylvania, said, “The biggest trend I’m seeing is a push beyond Certified Organic to address social, economic, and environmental issues. Customers want to know what I’m feeding my animals. Am I conscious of my regional watershed? Am I using regenerative practices? What are my welfare practices? How do I address predation? In the last year, customers have begun inquiring about issues on how social justice is addressed in my business. More and more folks are consciously voting with their food dollars.

“This year in particular, the pandemic showed everyone the fragility of our food system. ‘Eating local’ just isn’t a catchy phrase anymore as consumers encountered across-the-board shortages and limited access to food. From standing in line to get into stores and markets to restaurants, schools, and businesses being closed, the shockwaves into the food system have changed how people grow, sell, process, purchase, store, cook, and consume food. Agility is more critical than ever in agriculture. I’ve watched a lot of farmers struggle this last year in their pivot from restaurant to consumer sales. The online sales arena has been explosive in growth, but it’s resource intensive in terms of logistics.” (www.paintedhandfarm.com)

Margaret Snow (Birmingham), Owner, Snow’s Bend Farm in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, relayed, “The term agriculture is a broad one and encompasses a myriad of operations. I can speak only to smaller, diversified farms such as mine. Hoop houses—not to be confused with greenhouses—are popular on diversified vegetable farms. We have three, going on four, and plant directly into our fertile, river-bottom soil. The coverage the hoop house provides simply allows us to have more control in regards to the weather, specifically moisture and temperature.

‘Regenerative Agriculture’ is a term that you will hear often these days. It is a new term for an old management style that research is now showing results in carbon sequestration and can help mitigate climate change. The basic principles are adding organic matter into the soil in the form of cover crops, minimizing tillage, and generally caring for the soil in a way that adds more in terms of microbiology than you are taking away.

“In Alabama, I am happy to say that I am finding customers much more interested in nonconventional produce than in past years. We are turning people on to greens such as sorrel and roselle, as well as Korean melons and shiso. For me, having a variety of flavors coming out of our gardens keeps life, and our kitchen, interesting.” (www.snowsbendfarm.com)

Jamie Bryant (St. Louis), Owner, Blue Bell Farm in Fayette, Missouri, wrote, “There’s a trend for weddings and receptions to be held on farms. Our seventh-generation farm is one of the oldest family farms in Missouri. In 2014, we built an event barn designed to appear as if it has always been there. For weddings and farm dinners, we use fresh ingredients from our organic gardens that are part of our 300 acres. We also added a cut flower garden this year so that local florists can use flowers from the garden to create beautiful centerpieces for our events.” (www.bluebellfarm.org)
Carol Maddick (Kansas City), Owner, Campo Lindo Farms, Inc., in Lathrop, Missouri, said, “Of the many things we learned from COVID, one thing that I hope it taught us is that local food is not just a movement; it’s essential. When it first hit and the supply chain broke down, we were able to make extra trips to Kansas City so that there was some food to be had on the shelves. I hope that we learned that supporting local farms is essential, and I hope local farms take that responsibility seriously. At the same time, home delivery has become a huge trend due to safety and—dare I say—convenience, and it will be tough for small farmers to compete against ‘Big Ag’ in this market. I hope small farmers are successful in this. It won’t be easy, but because of who we are, I am betting that we are up to the task.” (www.campolindofarms.com)

Laurie Bostic (Dallas), Rockwall, Texas, owner of Barking Cat Farm, says, “We are seeing a lot of interest in regenerative farming and ranching where people desire to improve the health of—and therefore the productivity of—their land. This is accomplished by improving the naturally occurring biology in their soil, often employing holistic management practices and permaculture techniques. Our focus now is on helping others improve their soil biology.” (www.barkingcatfarm.com)

By Nancy Vienneau (Nashville)

Even with vaccination rates on the rise, COVID-19 and its impact will be with us for the foreseeable future. It’s a good time to initiate other fundraising methods for your chapter. Where in-person events may no longer work, online ones can.

Start by connecting with your area Community Foundation, and get your chapter on its roster of non-profits. This will open you up to many benefits, of which grants and scholarships are just a part. Across the country, many community foundations sponsor “Giving Days.” These are massive charitable campaigns that inspire donors at all levels to support the non-profits in their community. Each foundation has its own signature event. In Nashville, our community foundation’s 24-hour Giving Day is called The Big Payback. This year, it takes place May 5-6, and our chapter plans to participate for the first time.

The numbers are impressive. Since its 2014 inception, The Big Payback has garnered over $21 million for non-profits in 40 middle Tennessee counties through the generosity of more than 147,000 donors. 2020 was a banner year, raising $4.3 million for 988 organizations. Of the 31,700 who contributed, 10,000 were new donors.

How does it work? The foundation gives you an online platform where donors can find you. Its staff provides online training to teach you strategies for promoting your organization and creating a successful campaign. It publicizes and markets the event. It enlists corporate sponsors to provide incentives, matching funds, and gifts. It collects and disperses all of the donations.

Your chapter will increase its visibility throughout your community. And, you’ll become connected to a host of new donors.

Not all Giving Days are led by community foundations. Giving Tuesday, a global generosity movement launched in 2012, has become a wildly successful social media driven campaign. It takes place on the Tuesday after Thanksgiving. Our chapter participated last December and raised $2,346. It was easy to set up the fundraiser on our Facebook page. Member dames broadened its scope by sharing it; one dame started her own to support our chapter. We also joined a Giving Tuesday Facebook group to share questions, concerns and strategies.

On Giving Tuesday 2020, Facebook matched $7 million in donations—2 million earmarked for 100% match, the remaining 5 million- a 10% match. Facebook contributed $39 to our chapter, based on $390 of donations given the morning of Giving Tuesday. One caveat: it can take up to 75 days to get your funds. We think it’s worth the wait.
**AUSTIN** Denise Clarke

Spearheaded by chef Tabatha Stephens, Austin Dames served a socially distanced holiday dinner for the unsheltered for the 17th year in a row. Carol Huntsberger of Quality Seafood and Fer Candil of Paellas, Tapas and More, hosted a Paella fundraiser for Giving Tuesday to raise money for its scholarship program. Austin Dames, including board members Stacy Franklin and Nancy Marr, continue to host virtual social happy hours to keep its members connected and to share ideas and resources.

**BIRMINGHAM** Martha Johnston

The Birmingham Chapter has begun a day of service program at the Community Food Bank of Central Alabama. In both November and December, Dames took time to assist in putting together food boxes. In a two-hour period, Dames and a few others helped put together 435 boxes equaling 8265 pounds of food that were shared with our community. That food created 12,398 meals for people who were facing food insecurity during the holiday season.

“Take Out Tuesdays” feature one of the great establishments owned by our fabulous Dames each week and have become a popular way to support our members. It’s been great to see members not only participating but also sharing the day and information on the featured business with their own friends and followers via social media as well.

**BOSTON** Amanda Arrigotti-White

Boston Dames kicked off winter festivities with Annual High Tea at Boston Harbor Hotel. This was the last in-person event before the city began another round of shutdowns. Following the Annual High Tea, the Boston Chapter developed a series of digital events to continue to connect and raise money for local charities. In late November, Boston Dames participated in a digital lecture on “Closing the Wage Gap: Economic Equity for Working Women” with Boston Mayor Marty Walsh’s Office of Women’s Advancement. To kick off the holiday season, the Boston Chapter partnered with Usborne Books to host an exclusive Christmas Shopping Experience for an amazing cause! Marianna Skoulikaritis, owner of Pizza Chef of New London NH and Usborne consultant, guided Dames through virtual book shopping that benefited the Edgerley Family South Boston Boys & Girls Club. Through the event we were able to raise $2,000! In addition to this, the chapter launched a Dames Boutique with branded merchandise to support the Boston scholarship fund. The chapter rung in the New Year with a virtual cheers that allowed us to reflect on the unprecedented challenges and silver linings of 2020. The virtual cheers also benefited the Boston Children’s Hospital Toy Drive!

**CLEVELAND** Paris Wolfe

The Cleveland Chapter pivoted its annual fundraiser because of pandemic restrictions. Instead of in-person restaurant experiences, food lovers from Northeast Ohio purchased culinary products and experiences online to support the chapter’s 2021 culinary scholarship and Green Tables grant program. The auction/sale preceded the winter holidays and spotlighted donations from local culinary businesses. Highlights included a wine immersion tour, 12 beers of Christmas, brunch for eight, charcuterie trays and so much more.

**COLORADO** Lee Clayton Roper

As a “no-effort” way to raise funds, our Colorado Chapter signed up and was accepted in the Community Rewards Program of the Kroger grocery stores in Colorado (King Soopers and City Market). The stores donate annually to participating organizations based on a percentage of spending at these stores. Dames and their friends go online and link their Shop-
per Cards to the LDEI chapter. Another area nonprofit received $800 for three months of purchasing. Kroger stores nationwide may be participating in the program, so other Dame chapters might be interested in signing up for this program.

**DALLAS Kim Martin**

Dallas started off 2021 on a healthy note with a public series on Culinary Medicine organized by Kersten Rettig and Anne VanBeber, Dr. VanBeber, R.D., CCMS, is the Nutritional Science Chair & Leader of the Culinary Medicine program at Texas Christian University. The first virtual class was “Eating for Immunity” on January 14 benefiting the chapter's scholarship fund. Capitalizing on the use of zoom to connect folks far and near, the chapter's wine club hosted a virtual port tasting event in January that was open to the public. Special guest speaker Rui Ribero, the USA Market Manager for Symington Family Estates, led the tasting live from Portugal of four Warre's Ports. The other chapter clubs continued to meet in the last quarter. The cookbook club chose Judy Rogers’ *The Zuni Cafe Cookbook* for the December/January selection. The New Member Network used two lies and truth as an ice breaking tool. Many unexpected and interesting things were learned about all the attendees. The club meetings are helping our chapter form stronger bonds while we cannot be together in person.

**LOS ANGELES/ORANGE COUNTY Miki Hackney**

For the November “Lard Lovers Recipe Contest,” presented by Coast Packing Company, the West Coast judging was hosted by Miki Hackney of Melissa’s Produce. This was a month-long showcase of what the venerable animal fat can do in the hands of talented home chefs. Miki prepared the nominated dishes for three Dames from our chapter to judge and submit their votes to Coast Packing’s national tallies. As a result, a donation to the public. Special guest speaker Rui Ribero, the USA Market Manager for Symington Family Estates, led the tasting live from Portugal of four Warre's Ports. The other chapter clubs continued to meet in the last quarter. The cookbook club chose Judy Rogers’ *The Zuni Cafe Cookbook* for the December/January selection. The New Member Network used two lies and truth as an ice breaking tool. Many unexpected and interesting things were learned about all the attendees. The club meetings are helping our chapter form stronger bonds while we cannot be together in person.

**MINNESOTA Amy Lynn Brown**

We held our last in-person meeting in late September with a farm dinner at woman-owned Iron Shoe Farm. We dined alfresco under a canopy tent with a menu by Stephanie Hedrick, Executive Chef at the Minneapolis Women’s Club.

Zoom-wise, in October, Dames hosted a Halloween party with spooky-themed appetizer boxes and cocktail kits designed by Amy Brown (Chowgirls Catering) and Betsy Nelson (That Food Girl) were shared and later consumed at a Zoom cocktail class and social gathering. Our November meeting was a chocolate, caramel and Port wine tasting led by Nikki Erpelding featuring candies by women-owned businesses. The shared food experience was enjoyed by members via Zoom. Our 2020 holiday party—also virtual—was truly special as our guest was a Minnesota treasure, 101-year-old Marjorie Johnson, author of *Blue Ribbon Baking* books. Kim Ode and Meredith Deeds hosted, sharing stories and tips as perennial judges in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* Cookie Contest. Also in December, a wildly successful fundraiser, Party-In-A-Box, saw 150 people buying curated cheese, charcuterie and wine boxes designed by Nikki Erpelding and Liz Nerud.

**NEW ENGLAND Trish Karter**

In November, we hosted our annual meeting via Zoom. For a chapter that is geographically large, it was wonderful to use this new meeting platform to see each other’s faces. Our keynote speaker was Trish Karter, current Principal at trishkarter.com with roots in food, art and hospitality as the original founder of Dancing Deer Baking Company, LightEffect Farms, and StreetWise Partners Consulting. In keeping with the LDEI theme, Trish explained that maintaining a practice of gratitude has helped her find silver linings in the ups and downs of her personal and professional life. Victoria Taylor shared heartwarming stories of customer and employee gratitude from Victoria Gourmet. Bonnie Henry brought us along as she outlined the important hunger relief work she has been spearheading as part of the Salem Food Pantry. We look forward to 2021 with a renewed sense of gratitude, community, and service.

**PHILADELPHIA Deanna Segrave-Daly**

In mid-November, our chapter held a virtual all-day, plant-based holiday meal workshop. Entitled “Keeping the Joy in the Celebration,” 12 local food and beverage women experts, including nine of our Dames: Fran Costigan, Kathy Gold, Char Nolan, Kim O’Donnel, Dorie Passen, Barbara Saler, Laura Taylor, Jill Weber, and Jen Zavala. They presented everything from vegan entrée and dessert recipes to new tradition wines and mocktails. The program was well received and generated a lot of discussion and camaraderie throughout the day.

**SAN ANTONIO Karen Haram**

San Antonio Dames shared the joy of the holidays at their annual Roy Maas Christmas Dinner, preparing food for 45 at-risk children
and young adults and 30 staff members. The event included a steak dinner with all the trimmings, prepared and served by Dames. Gingerbread houses, icing and candy decorations were donated for each child to decorate and keep. Dames shopped for gifts from each child’s personal list. Funds from our chapter plus personal and corporations contributions made the event and gift-giving possible.

Thanks to Green Tables Co-Chair Linda Beck Triesch and other Dames who provided food to SA Time Dollar Community during the holidays. For Thanksgiving and Christmas, Dames provided 80 turkeys and traditional side dishes, placing them in reusable grocery bags with turkey information.

Our Time Dollar Angel Tree project was our chapter’s way of giving to our community during difficult pandemic times. Several in-need families consisting of seniors and children presented the chapter with their holiday wish lists, which included items from microwaves and bath towels to jeans and racing cars.

Chapter funds and individual and corporate contributions allowed us to have the events and gifts for the recipients. Photo: Di-anna Arias readies a cookie jar for giving. Diana Adkison (left) and Kim Mauldin organize gift bags. Beautifully decorated cookie jars were presented to recipients.

SOUTH FLORIDA Stephanie Miskew

There hasn’t been a dull moment for the sunny South Florida Dames, who’ve kept their palates primed with a variety of delicious, holiday-inspired programs. Brad Hedemann, Director of Zingerman’s mail order department in Ann Arbor, hosted an informative class on “How to Create a Holiday Charcuterie and Cheese Board.” We launched “Cocktails + Conversation,” a new monthly project highlighting our members. November featured Beaujolais Nouveau in honor of the wine’s release as chapter Secretary Robyn Webb joined with chapter Vice-President Stephanie Miskew to interview two members à la Actor’s Studio, Angela Santarelli and Denise Courshon Weisberg. The Great British Bakeoff finalist, chef and author Miranda Gore Brown stayed up late to teach a delightful virtual class on baking gingerbread Christmas cookies (aka “biscuits”) for us from her charming kitchen in the English countryside. Robyn Webb taught “Juban Hanukkah,” a latke cooking class with Cuban flair, combining the cuisines of the Jewish and Cuban cultures in Miami. We rounded out the year with a virtual class from Athens with Greek chef, restaurateur and cookbook author, Argiro Barbarigou for Kastani Stifado, Winter Chestnut Stew, as she regaled us with stories of her life and career in Greece.

ST. LOUIS Marilyn Freundlich

As the St Louis Chapter did not celebrate with our annual Holiday Party, we agreed to help the Ville Collaborative and Gift of Hope with their Christmas Event in North City. The Ville Collaborative is a group of organizations supporting the historic Ville neighborhood of North St. Louis. These include numerous 501(c)(3) nonprofits and several churches located in the Ville as well as several organizations that directly contribute to the overall health and wellness of the residents there. Their annual Christmas gathering has always included baskets of items for each family and toys and gifts for each child. For our part, we donated household and personal care items for the baskets that supported about 120 families in the Ville. In addition, we also made a monetary donation so any additional supplies could be purchased. Our hope is to continue this partnership with the Ville Collaborative and participate in their holiday dinner in 2021.

WASHINGTON, D.C. Jill Collins

This winter, our chapter inaugurated “Reel Tasty – Dames Discuss Food in Film” as a new way for our members to connect. It’s a movie club—like a book club without the reading. Every six weeks we watch a film that has plenty of food scenes or a food theme and Zoom-meet to discuss it. For the inaugural event, we previewed the Indian film, The Lunch Box, about the abbatwallahs who transport Mumbai housewives’ hot meals to their deskbound husbands. In the movie, a mix-up leads to a connection between a woman wanting to woo her husband through his stomach, and a stranger, a testy insurance claims adjuster, sliding toward early retirement. The two pass notes in the “lunchbox” and create a fantasy relationship.
Where are You?
How to Update Your LDEI Directory Listing

“She hasn’t worked here in five years,” said the representative at the restaurant I telephoned. The phone number was in the Dame’s listing at the www.ldei.org Member Directory. Really? If you haven’t updated your bio and contact information on our organization’s website for five years—or even ONE year, other Dames will not be able to contact you. PLEASE, PLEASE make sure your listing is correct. More than 2,000 Dames may be trying to reach you!

Directions to Update Your LDEI Directory Listing

1. To update your listing in the online Member Directory, which is used to generate a printable directory, go to: www.ldei.org and click on “Member Login.”

2. Scroll down and type in your username (the email address that LDEI has on file for you in the LDEI database.) Type in the password; then click on “Sign In.” If you are using the system for the first time, or don’t remember your password, click the Reset Password link. The system will automatically send you a new password (that you can change to something more personal once you login completely). Make sure to check your junk/spam folder for automated responses as they sometimes can end up there. If you are having difficulty with the system, just send a message at info@ldei.org

3. Click on “My Account.” This is where you can update your contact information and be listed in up to three professions. Click on “Update Account.”

4. Next, click on “My Biography.” Here you can upload a photo of yourself and enter biographical information. Then click on “Update Biography.”

That’s it. You’re done. Thank you for posting your correct information.—CiCi Williamson
Les Dames d’Escoffier International

ATLANTA
Michele Stumpe was named one of the 30 Crisis Leadership Trailblazers by the National Law Journal for her significant leadership and dedication to the hospitality industry throughout the coronavirus pandemic. She also received the “2020 Give Back Award” by Best Self Atlanta Magazine for her work in Africa helping impoverished communities and endangered animals.

AUSTIN
Kendall Antonelli and the Antonelli’s Cheese Shop was named as one of its Top Women in Grocery for 2020, by Progressive Grocer that spotlighted women in the industry who give back to their communities.

Cristin “Moxy” Castro has joined Demain Estates, a Napa Valley-based Négociant of Fine Wines, as regional sales director and export manager.

Joi Chevalier, owner of The Cook’s Nook, organized the first-ever Conference on Food Resilience, Equity and Access in Central Texas with speakers from Feeding Texas, the Food Tank, Black Food Sovereignty, HEB, and the Central Texas Food Bank, among others.

Jackie Letelier’s Casero Austin product, Texas chicken liver pâté, is a Good Food Awards 2021 finalist. www.goodfoodfdn.org/awards/finalists/

Mandi Nelson has joined Folio Fine Wine Partners as sales manager. www.foliowine.com

Julia Poplawsky launched a business raising chickens and eggs. She has worked as a whole animal butcher in the Central Texas for the last six years, and founded the Central Texas Meat Collective in 2017.

Hema Reddy with Crafty Counter announced its plant-based Wunder Nuggets are now offered in more than 600 Wal-Mart stores across the nation.

Trish Foreman Wesevich has established a new consulting business called Launchpoint Culinary Services to provide coaching for and advice to startup consumer product goods entrepreneurs.

Rae Wilson has opened a tasting room in the Texas Hill Country to feature her Wine for the People wines. Credit: Marshall Tidrick Photography

BIRMINGHAM
Laura Newman, owner of nationally recognized Queen’s Park, has opened Neon Moon a neighborhood cocktail bar in Downtown Birmingham. It specializes in draft and package beer, whiskey, fun cocktails and a small snack menu. The cocktail menu has 6-10 drinks featuring updated versions of 70s, 80s, and 90s favorites. www.queensparkbham.com, www.neonmoonbham.com

Becky Satterfield, pastry chef and owner of Satterfield’s Restaurant and El ZunZun, has established and is funding a scholarship in her name that will be awarded annually by the Birmingham Chapter’s Scholarship Awards Committee. Becky is a founding member and past-president of the Birmingham Chapter. www.satterfieldrestaurant.com, www.el-zunzun.com


Jennifer Yarbrough, owner of Crestline Bagel Co., reopened her downtown store in early January. www.crestlinebagel.com

DALLAS
Cindy Kleckner, RDN, LD, FAND has a brand new nationally published book on prevention and treatment of high blood pressure, The DASH Diet For Dummies, 2nd edition. Cindy contributed the culinary components of the book including meal planning and shopping tips and developed 45 delicious and flavorful recipes.

Kersten Rettig’s article about Lake Austin Spa Resort was selected as a winner for People Newspapers Best of 2020 People’s Pick awards. www.peoplenewspapers.com/2020/07/29/breathing-in-austin-the-perfect-medicine/

Tammany Stern, founder of Dallas based direct marketing company BestOfGuide, was included in Success Sisters Magazine “The Future of Business – Featuring, The Top 50 Female Entrepreneurs To Watch in 2021”

MINNESOTA
Amalia Moreno-Damgaard was named the 2020 SBA Minnesota Women in Business Champion by the U.S. Small Business Administration for her advocacy for women. She also received the 2020 Catalyst Award by Women Venture, as a woman who has contributed in a substantial way to women’s entrepreneurial success in the Twin Cities. www.womenventure.org/events/WMB.html

NASVILLE
Sylvia Ganier was elected the first female Chair of the Metropolitan Nashville Agriculture Extension Board. Currently serving as the first female Extension Director, Sylvia was tapped for the position by exemplifying leadership in the food, education and farming community. She had previously served on Board term as an at large member.
NEW ENGLAND
Mattie Daughtry, co-owner of Moderation Brewing, successfully won her campaign for Maine State Senate District 24. Mattie has spent the past eight years as a Maine State Representative. She is eager to focus on strengthening local food systems and work with the restaurant and hospitality industries to recover from this challenging year.

www.mattiedaughtry.com

Bonnie Henry, Board Chair of the Salem Food Pantry, led a major expansion to improve food security to distribute nearly one million pounds of food, serve 2,200 families, and provide a warehouse hub for North of Boston communities. Bonnie was honored in the “Wonder Women” exhibit of the PEM Museum, Salem, Massachusetts.

www.thesalempantry.org

Camille Collins, chapter treasurer, is now Director of Marketing & Communications at Commander’s Palace, the iconic Brennan family restaurant in the Garden District. Camille was previously marketing director at Creole Cuisine Restaurant Concepts.

www.commanderspalace.com/

Alison Vega-Knoll, chef/owner of the Bucktown seafood restaurant, Station 6 and chef Chris Wilson, former culinary director for Emeril Lagasse’s Homebase company, opened a new gourmet market, The Larder. The market features gourmet food for take-out and highlight local culinary artisans.

www.lardergourmetmarket.com

NEW YORK
Wanda Mann, founder of the wine lifestyle website Wine With Wanda (www.winewithwanda.com), was invited by the New York Wine & Grape Foundation to host a virtual wine tasting featuring sparkling wines from New York and moderated a panel of five winemakers. Wanda was also named the east coast editor for The SOMM Journal.

NEW ORLEANS
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www.commanderspalace.com/

PHILADELPHIA
Diane Nussbaum, owner of Diane’s Patisserie, was awarded the Best of Weddings 2021 for Wedding Cakes for The Knot and Wedding Wire. Her patisserie has been in the Knot’s Hall of Fame for the past eight years. www.dianespatisserie.com Credit: Women’s Culinary Guild

SAN ANTONIO
Elizabeth Johnson moved her Pharm Table restaurant to one of the city’s hottest locations, Southtown. The restaurant is open for lunch and dinner with new menu items and specialty cocktails, natural wine, cider and beer, served on a patio for safe dining.

Leslie Komet Ausburn of Komet Communications has received the Public Relations Society of America’s Tex Taylor Award for Lifetime Achievement. Her company is an award-winning full-service boutique PR/Marketing firm with experience in the areas of hospitality, consumer product goods, professional service, and nonprofits.

Lisa Wong moved her popular Rosario’s for the third time since she began her business in 1992. It’s now in its forever home at the historical El Mirador. She is making a significant commitment to preserve the two historic, residential buildings on the site and adding a rooftop terrace.

SOUTH FLORIDA
Denise Courshon, the chapter’s Chairperson, worked with the Miami Consulate to engage them in our French-inspired programs. She delivered a Galette des Rois (King Cake) to the Consulate, thanking them for promoting South Florida’s Fête des Rois event.

Alessandra Esteves and her husband Guilherme de Macedo, the team behind Florida Wine Academy and various other events like Vino-Summit wine conference and Miami Champagne Week, recently opened a brick-and-mortar store in Palmetto Bay to add to their long list of contributions to the Miami wine world.

www.305wine.com

Natalia Levy, Tampa, Florida, restaurateur and chef and HI hospitality group announced the opening of a third restaurant in their portfolio. They partnered with a world-class team of food and beverage professionals to develop downtown Sarasota’s exciting new Modern Asian Concept, Kojo.

www.kojosarasota.com

Kathy Casey co-founded the Small Airport Action Committee to advocate and create a united impact on behalf of small, minority, and women owned airport dining and retail businesses at Sea-Tac airport. Casey, who owns multiple airport hospitality concepts, hopes to help others start SBAAC groups at airports across the U.S.

SANTA BARBARA
Alessandra Esteves of Wines & Women aka Taylor Award for Outstanding Service to Wine in the Americas. The chapter’s Chairperson, worked with the Miami Consulate to engage them in our French-inspired programs. She delivered a Galette des Rois (King Cake) to the Consulate, thanking them for promoting South Florida’s Fête des Rois event.

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SEATTLE
Jerylina Brusseau was featured on the January 10th cover story of The Seattle Times’ Pacific NW Magazine. The article bore witness to the life-changing, community-building work of 25-year-old PeaceTrees Vietnam, which she founded. Over the years, PeaceTrees has helped clear 1,500 acres of land, and removed more than 115,000 unexploded bombs.

Kathy Casey co-founded the Small Airport Action Committee to advocate and create a united impact on behalf of small, minority, and women owned airport dining and retail businesses at Sea-Tac airport. Casey, who owns multiple airport hospitality concepts, hopes to help others start SBAAC groups at airports across the U.S.

Katherine Kehrli was featured January 7th on NBC’s TODAY show. Founder of Community Loaves, Kehrli uses her home as a staging area for the project. The effort has grown from a small initial donation to delivery of over 1,300 loaves of bread to Hopelink, an area food bank.

www.communityloaves.org/2021/01/today-show/

Angela Chen’s Pike Place-based touring company, Savor Seattle, was bought by Homegrown. These two Seattle food companies are combining forces. Homegrown will keep the Savor Seattle name and the majority of its team in place, while Angela will stay on in an advisory role.

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Afghan Cuisine: Crossroads of the Silk Road

Dining in restaurants during the pandemic is governed by health department rules. In Virginia, Maryland, and Washington, D.C., we are limited to gatherings of not more than 10 people, which negates our usual large, in-person chapter luncheons. A couple of us decided to have lunch in January at a highly rated Afghan restaurant, Aracosia, in McLean, Virginia, to learn more about Afghanistan’s cuisine.

Aracosia is the Greek name of an ancient province centered around the Argandab valley in Kandahar. Omar Masroor, one of the restaurant’s owners, explained to us how the country’s location influenced its cuisine.

The fabled Silk Road has threaded through Afghanistan for centuries. The country’s location, equidistant between the China Sea and the Mediterranean, made it a strategic ancient crossroads. Omar told us that their mazza (appetizers) include—dumplings (ashak) and turnovers (bichak) that were influenced by Silk Road traders from China. The assorted fillings include pumpkin, potato and leeks, eggplant, and meat. He said that the national Afghan dish, Kabuli palaw, is actually borrowed from its neighboring “-stan” countries: Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan. The rice dish contains meat (usually lamb) and stock and topped with fried raisins, slivered carrots, and pistachios. Kabobs are also prominent as they are in the whole Middle East. Afghan desserts include baklava (borrowed from the Ottoman Empire), white cake flavored with cardamom and pistachios, and firni, a cornstarch-thickened milk pudding flavored with rosewater and cardamom and topped with pistachios. There is much more to learn about Afghan cuisine. Perhaps we will have a chapter-wide luncheon when it’s safe to gather as in the “old days.”—CiCi Williamson (Washington, D.C.)
LDEI Brock Circle Kicks Off Give What You Can Campaign

By Bev Shaffer (Cleveland)
LDEI Immediate Past President

The Brock Circle was established to assist in stabilizing the financial foundation of LDEI now and into the future.

In honor of our founder, Grande Dame Carol Brock, the Brock Circle Committee was pleased to introduce an opportunity for Dames to become a Friend of the Brock Circle as part of this campaign. This first annual fundraising campaign that kicked off on December 14, Carol’s birthday, gives interested Dames and Chapters an opportunity to be a part of the Brock Circle and to be listed as a Friend for the year of their donation. All monies garnered by this opportunity will be divided for use and investment under the same formula as Brock Circle membership.

As an added incentive, the first 50 Dames giving $100 or more received a duo of Beautiful Briny Sea products in honor of Carol, compliments of our newest Brock Circle member, Suzi Sheffield (Atlanta).

Special thanks to these Dames who became Friends of the Brock Circle during this inaugural campaign:

Denise Poole
Mary McMahon
Bev Shaffer
Joan Brower
Deborah Woehler
Carey Aron
Mary Martini
Gail Forman
Barb Pires
Katherine Ruffing
Katherine Shearer
Kristine Holtz
Annie Boutin King
Deborah Lesley-Rivera
Sharon Van Meter
Patricia Erd
Alice Gautsch Foreman
Carol Hacker

If you would like further information on becoming a Brock Circle member or a Friend of the Brock Circle, feel free to reach me at bev.foodwithattitude@gmail.com.

We are truly grateful for the support of all our Brock Circle members.
Diversity, inclusion and equity are at the forefront of our world. To help us better understand the issues that impact us all, LDEI is partnering with Seattle Colleges and Christina Chang Equity Consulting on a series of interactive workshops that will take place on Zoom.

The four-part series is entitled, “Learning to Build a Diverse and Inclusive Culture” and is open to 200 Dames (first-come, first-served). This will be an eye-opening experience leading to deeper cultural awareness and a clearer understanding of how to navigate issues and create a welcoming, inclusive and diverse culture.

The workshops will take place on eight days in May, June, July, and August. Yes, this is a serious time commitment, but the subjects are weighty and the time will be spent in a number of small group break-out sessions with interactive discussions.

Educational programs like this are usually available only through large employers, but LDEI is committed to fulfilling our mission of education and addressing the issues that are playing into every layer of our lives, from our jobs to our communities to our LDEI organization to our personal relationships. LDEI is offering this exceptional educational experience for only $50 per person for the entire four-part series (eight sessions in all.)

Watch for emails to sign up. (Please note: registration for the entire four-part series is required.) For additional information, visit christinachangequityconsulting.com.

The workshops are:

**Cultural Awareness & Humility:**
May 15 from 11 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. ET and May 17 from 5-7:30 p.m. ET.
An introduction to issues and terminology and an exploration of personal values, beliefs, and attitudes and how they are shaped.

**Implicit Bias:**
June 19 from 11 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. ET and June 21 from 5-7:30 p.m. ET
A deep dive into the scientific phenomenon of the unconscious decisions that are often biased.

**Microaggressions:**
July 17 from 11 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. ET and July 19 from 5-7:30 p.m. ET
An exploration of the everyday, unconscious put-downs and insults that can dehumanize marginalized groups.

**Recognizing and Dismantling White Supremacy Culture at Work:**
Aug. 14 from 11-1:30 p.m. ET and Aug. 16 from 5-7:30 p.m. ET
A look into how organizations and individuals can step away from unconscious defaults and create a welcoming place for all to feel a sense of belonging.

—Liz Barrett (Chicago)