



Les Dames d'Escoffier
INTERNATIONAL



Founded in 2013

Ideibirmingham.org

Winter 2024

President's Note

Dear Dames,
Welcome, welcome to our new members! The LDEI new member class for 2024 is most impressive! A huge thank you to Dame LaCrista Hutchinson, the VP of membership who helped recruit these amazing new members. Thank you to Dame Leigh Sloss-Corra for hosting the orientation for new Dames. Our Birmingham chapter continues to benefit by leaning into our guiding principles and extending membership to women of excellence. Thank you so much to all who nominated new members and participated in the selection and orientation process. Great work, ladies!

At Fiesta this year, I was brought to happy tears meeting our precious scholarship recipient, Angelina Gutierrez Ortiz, and her family. This scholarship will be life-changing for Angelina and her family. Thank you Dame Anna Theokisto, chair of scholarships, and all of the Dames who participated in Fiesta.

How much fun was Champagne & Fried Chicken!? Dame Kathy G. Mezrano's vision for an outside picnic party was another huge success! Our guests enjoyed a delicious picnic on a beautiful September afternoon. Dame Jes Bennett along with the bar committee sold and

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A Fried-and-True Fundraiser: That's a Wrap for Our 2024 Champagne & Fried Chicken



by Donna Cornelius

The 2024 edition of Champagne & Fried Chicken is in the books: over 300 totes sold, 51 sponsors, more than 70K raised, 30+ cases of bubbly consumed, and countless smiles and toasts. While our fundraiser again was a success, we're always striving to make it even better.

Trying to find ways to do just that at an Oct. 7 brainstorming session were President Sonthe Burge, C&FC chair Kathy G. Mezrano, Jes Bennett, Clara Darling, Idie Hastings, Lindsey Noto-King, Audrey Pannell, Kay Reed, Dulce

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Rivera, Christiana Roussel, Leigh Sloss-Corra, Joy Smith, Pardis Stitt, Susan Swagler, and Rachel West. Here are some of the meeting's highlights:

- The grand total raised from this event was around \$92,000. Making an especially strong showing was our cocktail component, as sales totaled \$2,095 with great-tasting drinks using fewer ingredients.
- Discussion was held about refreshing our menu to bring something new to our supporters next year.
- Our social media posts were top-notch, but to make this source of publicity even better, we'll create a Facebook Event next year. Other strong PR efforts included TV interviews with our own media stars Christiana Roussel and Susan Swagler. We'll try to get TV coverage at the event itself next year.
- Possible sponsors should be approached earlier since many corporations and businesses want to allocate their donations near the beginning the year. A suggestion was made to have a session with tips to help us learn how to approach potential sponsors in effective ways.
- Watch for a survey of all Birmingham Dames asking for our opinions about C&FC.
- Mark your calendars for Sunday, Oct. 19, 2025. That's the date the committee has set for our next fundraiser. Pickup time would be 3-5 p.m. with our outdoor eating area, complete with a band, staying open an extra hour until 6 p.m.

No matter what tweaks we make to next year's C&FC, one thing's for sure: Working together to raise money for scholarships, grants, and community service projects is always one of the most fun aspects of being a Birmingham Dame!



Party Pics from C&FC 2024



Thank you to our 2024 sponsors!



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Spotlight on Dames at the 2024 FOOD+Culture Fest

by Leigh Sloss-Corra

The second annual BHM FOOD+ Culture Fest happened Sept 19-22 this year in various locations around Birmingham, including at the Market at Pepper Place on Saturday morning. Since the Market was in the midst of celebrating Women in Food Month, in partnership with LDEI, it was a perfect opportunity to make the focus of Saturday morning's event, FOOD+Market Mix, all about women food producers, beverage makers, writers, storytellers, and event planners, many of them Dames from our own chapter. Over half of our members either worked, volunteered, or attended. There were five signature events during this year's four-day festival:

- FOOD+Frank, Thursday evening, was a cocktail reception and awards ceremony celebrating Chef Stitt and his legacy.
- FOOD+Heritage, Friday evening, was a seated dinner in the streets of Pepper Place, focusing on the city's Greek community and culinary heritage.
- Saturday morning, FOOD+Market Mix focused on women in food at the Market at Pepper Place.
- Saturday afternoon, FOOD+ Fire, sponsored by Southern Living, was a BBQ-tailgate-picnic spectacular at Sloss Furnaces. Fun!
- FOOD+Funk wrapped up the weekend on Sunday morning, at Sloss Furnaces, with craft cocktails and small bites focusing on grits. Delicious!

As part of FOOD+Market Mix on Saturday, the first cooking demo of the day was hosted by Dame Rita Bernhart of Luca. As usual she had lots of support from Dames who as-



Above: Dames Amanda Stanfield, Tricia Manzanero, and past scholarship winner Sabrina Murray assisted James Beard Award-winning chef Jody Adams at one of the cooking demos. At right: Grande Dame Carla Hall spoke at the Market about the importance of farmers' markets and authenticity in food.



sisted and came to cheer her on.

The second cooking demo was hosted by Boston superstar Jody Adams, who made Roasted Pepper and Charred Tomato Tonnato with Olive Relish. It was complicated to make but the audience loved it—and her.

Female Entrepreneur grant winner Lisa Strelnikova of Cake Honeys Ukrainian bakery was

thrilled to be part of the festival.

This year's Grande Dame winner, celebrity chef Carla Hall, spoke to a packed audience about the importance of markets, authenticity in food, and the role culture plays in cooking and hospitality.

Carla Hall was a great guest and posed with all her fans, including members of our chapter!

Several Dames were part of



a program presented by the Alabama Humanities Alliance, sharing stories about food memories and their unique food culture, including Dames Jasmine Smith and Fanoula Gulas. Rebecca Gann is the festival Program Director and made sure everything ran smoothly.

During the Market, Dames Rita Bernhardt and Rachel Ishee sold items from the Mercado at Luca.

Former Dame Rosemary Dallam came up for the event and grabbed a hug from Market Executive Director Leigh Sloss-Corra.

Top left: Rachel Ishee and Rita Bernhardt sold items from the Mercado at Luca.

Top right: Jasmine Smith shared her stories about food memories and her unique food culture during a program presented by the Alabama Humanities Alliance.

Middle right: Gia McCollister, Pam Lolley, Sonthe Burge, Kate Nicholson, and Agatha Pihakis staffed the LDEI Birmingham tent at the Market.

At right: Cheryl Slocum, Cathy Sloss Jones, and Anna Theoktisto



Celebrating a Valuable Partnership— and a Special Young Woman—at Fiesta

Our scholarship partnership with Fiesta, Inc. started with a lovely taco. Actually, it was Dame Cristina Almanza dressed as the best-looking taco ever on a local television morning show. She was talking about Fiesta, Inc. and that organization's scholarship giving. Susan Swagler, who was our chapter's immediate past president at the time, was watching. Knowing that we were trying to expand our own giving, she suggested that we team up with Fiesta to better reach young women in the local Hispanic and Latino communities.

We have done so for the past three years, but this year seemed different. This year, our \$5,000 scholarship went to a smart young woman named Angelina Gutierrez Ortiz, and her story and her determination touched all our hearts.

We gathered with Angelina and her family behind the big stage before the official presentation, and the meaningful, face-to-face conversation we had with this young woman left everyone a little teary. Chapter president Sonthe Burge said talking with her made all our hard work so worth it.

Angelina's family is from Guatemala. She is a senior at Austin High School in Decatur, Alabama. She's planning to study culinary arts at Wallace State Community College with a goal already in mind. She says, "I want to open my own small business, a bakery." Angelina says she loves to bake muffins, cinnamon rolls, and a traditional Guatemalan bread with a little sugar on top.

"I'm the first generation of my family to go to college," Angelina



Above: We had a wonderful turnout of Dames to our tent at Fiesta on September 28 and to the presentation of our \$5,000 scholarship to Angelina Gutierrez Ortiz. At right: Angelina Gutierrez Ortiz is the first in her family to attend college.



told us. "I'm the oldest of my five siblings."

She says she was in her culinary class in her school's career academy when she found out she had won the scholarship. "I started crying. I couldn't even believe it. I told my teachers, and my teachers were so proud. My classmates were giving me hugs and a lot of 'good lucks.'"

When Fiesta presented Angelina with her giant check, they told the crowd that "the scholarship

is earmarked for a young woman in the culinary and hospitality industry. The scholarship is made possible through a partnership with Fiesta and Les Dames d'Escoffier Birmingham Chapter."

The presenter finished by reading the quote Angelina had submitted with her winning application. It was from Theodore Roosevelt who said, "The best prize that life offers is the chance to work hard at work worth doing."

Another Year, Another Les Dames Takeover at the Market at Pepper Place

by Jes Bennett

As Dame Leigh Sloss-Corra says, "Good things always happen at the market," and the Les Dames Market Takeover for Women in Food Month was no exception.

Pepper Place Market played host to a showcase of talented women in our chapter, as well as the broader community at large, for the month of September. Each Saturday featured a different theme with a chef demo and weekly bake sale, raising an estimated \$2,000 to benefit our efforts with The WellHouse, a non-profit focused on the restoration of female victims of human trafficking.

Events kicked off on September 7th with Latin Food Week. Chef Nataly Rivera, sister of Dame Dulce Rivera of Mi Pueblo, made chilaquiles, as Dame Cristina Almanza narrated step by step.

Sweet Treats Week, September 14th, contended with rain, causing the cancellation of chef Takeeka Goshay of Adored Sweets' planned demo. The bake sale was moved inside the Farmstand Shop thanks to Dames Alex Flowers and Deborah Stone.

September 21st combined Mediterranean Food Week with FOOD+Culture Fest, ensuring a huge turnout for an all-star lineup of talent. On the 29th Street stage, LDEI Grande Dame Carla Hall delivered a talk to a packed audience. Celebrity Chef Kelsey Barnard Clark was interviewed on stage, followed by a chef demo and participating in a cooking competition at FOOD+Fire. Dame Rita Bernhardt



Above: Dames at Healthy Food Week talked with those who stopped by the tent about our fundraiser and outreach efforts in the community. Right: Dames at Latin Food Week.



of Luca demoed Panzanella, and James Beard award-winning chef Jody Adams (Porto, Saloniki, Trade, Rialto, and La Padrona in Boston) made Roasted Pepper and Charred Tomato Tonnato with Olive Relish. Dame Idie Hastings generously loaned the full use of the Hot & Hot Fish Club kitchen and equipment, so Chef Adams and Dames Amanda Stanfield and Tricia Manzanero could prep and assist with the demonstration. All street vendors were Dame-owned or women-owned businesses, as well as the numerous women authors, food creators, poets, and writers present at the event. Even scholar-

ship recipient Sabrina Murray was on hand to help in appreciation of the chapter's gift awarded to her two years ago.

The month wrapped up on September 28th with Healthy Foods Week. Samford Wellness Kitchen's Dame Clara Darling presented a Fall Vegetable Farro Salad. She enlisted help from some of her Samford students dedicated to making healthy eating attainable for a broad audience.

The events marked the eighth year of the talent showcase and bake sale, proving once again that women in food are making some of the best things happen.

Meet Our New Members!

Our chapter gained 14 new members in August 2024. Here, get to know the remaining eight of these extraordinary women a little better. The first six new Dames were featured in the Fall 2024 newsletter.



Chae Richards

Chae Richards is a hospitality professional with a passion for exceptional service. She has deep roots in the Magic City, where she proudly lives with her husband, Codey, and their daughter, Marloe.

Chae has excelled as the Director of Sales at EventWorks, where she specializes in making her clients' visions come to life. She has expertise in tenting, rentals, lounge furniture, drapery, and more.

Her career began at Café Dupont, where she gained invaluable knowledge in food, wine, and services. This paved the way for her future role in private events.

Prior to her current role, Chae was the General Manager at Savoie Catering during its formative years. It was here that she gained superior knowledge and further honed her skills in the hospitality industry.



Chanda Temple

Chanda Temple is an award-winning writer with a love of discovering incredible food, whether it's in Birmingham or beyond. In addition to writing and highlighting good food finds, she's all about building connections in her community.

In her role as senior project manager in the Mayor's Office of Birmingham, she's involved in initiatives that bring people together in meaningful ways.

She handles the city's summer Food Truck Friday, which helps food truck owners gain exposure and connect with new customers.

She is also the creator of the city's StrongHer campaign, which highlights unsung "sheroes" in the Magic City. Started in 2019, StrongHer has highlighted nearly 200 women focused on making a difference.



Katie Strickland

Katie Strickland, the owner of Katie's Plates, transformed her passion for food and nutrition into a thriving gourmet meal-delivery business in 2014.

She takes pride in employing a staff primarily composed of women. Born and raised in Birmingham, Katie's community roots run deep. Katie is dedicated to innovation and delivering fresh, nutritious meals to families in Birmingham and beyond.

Katie's commitment to quality and community is evident in her business practices, ensuring minimal food waste and donating leftovers to those in need.



Tanesha Sims-Summers

Tanesha Sims-Summers, an award-winning graduate from the University of Alabama at Birmingham where she studied marketing and Spanish, has always had a passion for people and community.

After nearly 15 years in a corporate career of investment banking and digital marketing, she decided to pursue entrepreneurship.

She co-owns and operates Naughty But Nice Kettle Corn Co. with her husband, Clem Summers. Her joy is in raising her four extraordinary children ages 19, 19, 9, and 7 and fur baby, Merry. She credits her father, aunts, and supportive family and friends for inspiring her on her entrepreneurship journey.

NBNKC, based in Birmingham and established in 2014, specializes in unique sweet-and-salty kettle corn blends. Their small-batch, kettle-to-hand process allows for the freshest snack possible. The high-quality flavorings keep "Pop-heads" (customers) coming back for more. NBNKC helps people celebrate life's sweet moments whether it's weddings, employee engagement celebrations or a family movie night.



Becca Flanagan

Becca Flanagan began her career in the hospitality industry over 10 years ago, working in various capacities for apartment communities, international luxury & eco-tourism travel companies, hotel sales & management, and event coordination.

During COVID, she pivoted to working with Rush Wines in Irondale, and within one year, rose to her position as operations manager for the locally owned boutique wine distributor.

Becca attended Samford University where she earned her bachelor's degrees in history and French. Both fields are surprisingly handy in the fine wine industry, helping Becca to lend rich historical and political context (and pronunciation prowess) to an already-enjoyable adult beverage!

In her spare time, Becca enjoys traveling, reading novels, spending time outdoors with her husband, Franklin, and their rescue pups, Fancy and Cava, exploring Birmingham and the surrounding areas, and traveling virtually throughout the world through food and drink with her friends.



Kimberly McNair Brock

Kimberly McNair Brock, chef and certified holistic health coach, is passionate about equipping the community with delicious plant medicine and teaching others about the benefits of consuming a more plant-based diet.

Through her company, Bitty's Living Kitchen, Kim provides an alternative to wellness for people who want to live a more holistic lifestyle. Her business provides plant-based meals for people who want to transition to a whole-foods, plant-based lifestyle. She takes clients on a journey of reversing their palates by showing them how easy it is to prepare these foods.

Coaching her clients on how to harvest healthy habits allows them to reverse dis-ease in the body which ultimately results in healing through food.

In the industry for two decades, Kim is planning to open her first brick-and-mortar location in the spring (see page 28).



Brianna Tamburello

Brianna Panos Tamburello is the owner and operator of two local restaurants in the Hoover suburb of Birmingham. Vecchia Pizzeria and Mercato is an authentic Neapolitan-style brick-oven pizzeria, and Moss Rock Tacos & Tequila highlights street tacos and unique tequila-based beverages. She is also the co-founder of Cooking With Culture, which offers hands-on cooking classes, Wine & Dine cooking demonstrations and an original Throw Dough Pizza experience.

Heather Hay

Heather Hay is Director of Operations at FoodBar in Cahaba Heights.

She has worked in the hotel and restaurant industry for 33 years, mostly in the Birmingham metro area.

Heather is well known to our Dames, with a reputation for hard work, creativity, and a willingness to give back to the community.



Top left: The class of 2024 at the new member reception on September 9.

Middle left: Anne Cain, Katie Cornutt, Becca Flanagan, Audrey Pannell, and Tricia Manzanero at the Gardens Café.

Bottom left: Our chapter welcomed 14 accomplished new members in this year's class.



We Went West to Learn, Laugh, and Contribute

by Susan Swagler, Betsy McAtee, and Sonthe Burge

Several members of our chapter traveled to Phoenix, Arizona, for the International Conference held at the beautiful Wigwam Resort. This will be the last conference until 2026, when it will return in a new format, and we all made the most of it—sharing how we operate here at home and learning best practices from others.

Members representing our chapter included Dames Lindsey Noto-King, Dulce Rivera and Betsy McAtee as well as these Dames who served as Delegates: Chapter President Sonthe Burge, Immediate Past President Leigh Sloss-Corra, VP of Membership Cristina Almanza; Technology Coordinator and Past President Susan Swagler.

These conferences always offer great opportunities to bond with each other. And our time together—talking business, planning for our chapter's future, sharing food and celebrating our friendships—is the sort of thing that makes our chapter better and stronger and more resilient.

In Phoenix, we worked hard and played hard, too.

There are now 42 LDEI chapters worldwide with more than 2,600 members. More than half of the membership is over the age of 50, so we should be personally excited about all the younger members in our Birmingham chapter. Another exciting thing: Together, LDEI members have raised more than \$10 million for the causes that are important to us. The Birmingham chapter, in just 11 short years, has done our share.



We dressed in our cowgirl bling for Friday's event at conference.

This conference, while somewhat pared down, was another excellent opportunity to meet members of other chapters and exchange ideas, talk about our successes with Champagne & Fried Chicken (y'all, we are known throughout the world for that!), our work with The WellHouse and the Community Food Bank of Central Alabama, and our partnership with Fiesta, Inc. for scholarship giving.

Our chapter was singled out during the official Annual Meeting (attended by delegates from all over the world) for our C&FC and our WellHouse work.

Also, during this meeting, International President Kathy Gold, in her address, reported:

- Current delegates will remain delegates through 2025.
- No dues increase.
- Annual delegate meeting for 2025 will be held via Zoom.

- Members are asked to list their professions on the International website. (On that note: Please see Susan Swagler to update your bio on our own website!!!)
- The next big international meeting will be an MFK Fisher Writing Symposium April 4 and 5 in Nashville. (We'll share more via email and Slack as details become available.)
- The next International Conference will be Spring of 2026 in Las Vegas.
- Chapters are asked to send news and stories for *The Feast* and *The Nibble*.

The educational programs at Conference are always hit-or-miss. That's one reason why International is revamping the event. Moving forward, a Conference Committee at the International level will coordinate all educational sessions

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and rely on local chapters for ideas regarding contributors, tours and restaurant partners to best showcase the host chapter and city.

This takes a lot of the organizational heavy lifting off the individual chapters and should result in more consistent educational opportunities. All this is the result of the surveys attendees have filled out over the past few years and it's an effort to get more Dames to participate in the conference.

Here is some of what we learned in Phoenix, collected from reports from various sessions:

Chapter Leadership Forum: Serving with Compassion

This session was focused mostly on resolving conflicts with tact and compassion. The big takeaway: Treat each other with respect and professionalism. If there is conflict, try to meet people where they are.

The moderators had us do some exercises to pinpoint what's truly important to us and how our concerns and interests overlap with those of others. There are handouts we can share. Maybe we can do a pop-up program using them!

The other big point was to lead with people's individual Talents, Time and Treasures in mind.

Maybe someone can't give a lot of money (treasure) but they do have time to volunteer. Everyone has talents (otherwise they wouldn't be Dames), so it's important to identify those strengths and allow people to serve in a way that they will be successful. Our own Dame Kathy G. Mezrano is excellent at doing this. That's one reason why C&FC has been so successful; she has people on committees that suit their abilities and capabilities. We



The conference was held at The Wigwam resort in Phoenix, Arizona. This was the last conference until spring of 2026.

pointed that out in the session as a win!

There were suggestions to survey members about their WHY ... Why did you choose to become a Dame? So, look for a survey soon.

President Sonthe Burge was there, too, and she says she was struck by the idea of "leading in an inclusive way with empathy, self-awareness and giving grace."

Robin Griffith, who is a consultant specializing in membership development, stressed the importance of creating personal connections. Phone calls are best!

Tanya Holland discussed creating specific committees or task forces to address issues. Ex: A Hospitality Committee to address outreach and connecting to older members.

Other suggestions included organizing a Board Retreat to work on a special project. Member surveys to

better learn where people fit in and what's important to them and determining their capacity for Time, Talents and Treasures.

Navigating Social Media

There was some good info here. We'll bullet point the recommendations from the experts on the panel. Some of this is common social media sense. Some of it might be new to you.

- Use 8 or fewer hashtags in your posts.
- If people tag you, post their content on your own story.
- If you use influencers, vet them. They should have 8% to 10% engagement on their own posts.
- Post at least 3 times a week.
- Ask questions in your posts.
- The app CapCut is a helpful video editor with lots of templates. They advised that it is not as user-friend-

ly as it could be, and some of our own members say the same. But you can give it a try. If you do, add your own music from Instagram as there are more choices there.

- Talk-to-the screen videos are highly effective.
- People love behind-the-scenes videos that show how events come together.
- Download spreadsheets for social media calendars and plan the entire year of posting.
- Build community by liking and commenting.
- See when your target market is most active and post accordingly.
- Be timely and respectful with posts (if something tragic is happening in your community, be mindful of that when posting).
- Facebook posts should be 40-100 characters long.
- Instagram captions should max out at 125 characters.
- 10-second photo compilations or videos are effective; even 2- to 10-second ones do well. Limit them to 30 seconds max.
- Successful kinds of content include volunteer spotlights, success stories, explanations, and tips. They suggested an educational component in every 4-5 posts.

Food Writing for Today's Media

Unfortunately, this session was a bust. About half the people in the room were aspiring food writers (by show of hands). I've had 40+ years of successful food-writing experience and quickly realized there was not much there there. The panel mostly was talking about how food writing has evolved from food magazines and women's pages in newspapers to online publications and individual blogs. Only so much you can say about that! In fact, there were almost



We reconnected with Dame Carla Hall, who recently visited Birmingham for FOOD + Culture and was this year's Grande Dame recipient.

no takeaways from this session aside from a book titled *The Complete Recipe Writing Guide* and a suggestion to use Google trends to see what people are interested in.

Dames Sonthe Burge, Lindsey Noto-King and Leigh Sloss-Corra went to Cook Like an Arizona Dame! Arizona's Culinary Cultural Heritage-Indigenous Ingredients. Sonthe offers this report:

The culinary cultural heritage of Arizona is a robust blend of Southwest, Hispanic, and Indigenous Native ingredients and cooking techniques. This was a detailed and informative cooking demonstration. Each participant was given a booklet with recipes, tips, and explanation of the ingredients used.

Dame Candy Lester had a table set up with a huge array of peppers, native tepary beans, mesquite flour,

cholla buds, nopales, Mexican spices, and more.

For our class, Candy made the following dishes:

- Fresh Corn Tamales: Layers of corn flavor balanced with toasted spices, cheese and chile-filled tamales reduce tamale prep time to hours, instead of days as in meat-filled versions.
- Salsa Verde: The easiest and possibly tastiest salsa verde you'll ever make. Fabulous with tamales as well as grilled meats and veggies, seafood, tacos, and scrambled eggs; or use it as a base for a quick sauce. This sauce is a foundational element in Southwest cooking.
- Ensalada de Nopales: A vibrant, crunchy, hearty salad of Southwest and indigenous elements that works as a side dish or center of the plant-based main dish.

- Poblano Rellenos de Pollo Verde: A grand culmination of Southwest flavors, these baked rellenos pack in the flavor, while avoiding all the traditional pitfalls of battering and deep-frying.

- Dulce de Leche Cheesecakes: Individual size cheesecakes that combine all the golden goodness of Mexican caramel (Cajeta) with cheesecake.

After the cooking demonstration class, the chef at the Wigwam prepared all these recipes, and participants were treated to an amazing lunch. “This session and lunch were a highlight for me. Leigh, Lindsey and I sat with Candy at lunch, and she told us about the classes she teaches online to the public.”

The Arizona Dames including Chef Candy Lester host an online cooking class series Cook Like a Dame, which anyone can sign up for.

Sonthe says: “Candy also offered to reteach the class we attended at conference for our Birmingham chapter!! Let me know if you would like the recipes.”

Betsy McAtee shared what she learned in **Chocolate, Wine and Coffee—When Dirt (terroir) Really Matters**

- Chocolate: Philippines/Madagascar/Belize/Guatemala Madagascar had a strong vanilla smell and acidic finish due to the volcanic soil. Belize had a smooth finish due to the rainforest soil. The chocolate from Guatemala was Betsy’s favorite.

PRO TIP: Always store chocolate in a wine fridge and not the refrigerator!

- Coffee: Brazil/Guatemala/Tanzania



Table decorations during the conference included these boots handpainted by a local artist. They were auctioned off at the end of the event.

Brazil: Coffee beans grow in low elevations with a warm tropical area; soil has clay and iron, which makes for a nutty finish with hints of caramel (Betsy’s personal favorite). Coffee from Guatemala grows in high, cool elevations in soil rich in volcanic ash and minerals; it is vibrant and acidic with fruity notes. Tanzanian coffee grows on the slopes of Mt Kilimanjaro with volcanic soil and has a citrus-like finish.

- Wine: All Arizona wines from Southern Arizona

The biggest differences in the three wines came from the soil composition. Sonoita AVA has very tough iron-rich soil where they grow Malbec wines with

hints of blackberry. (Wine tasted: The Joker 2021). Chiricahua AVA near the New Mexico border has sandstone and clay soil from volcanic formations; these vines get lots of rain due to snow melt from the mountains (Wine tasted: Rhyolite 2017 Petite Sirah). Willcox AVA is in a valley with less rain but similar sandstone and some volcanic limestone. (Wine tasted: Sand Reckoner 2019 Tannat). This tannic wine with its mineral finish and natural acidity was Betsy’s favorite.

Betsy also attended **Foraging in the Desert**

The key takeaway: Never forage alone and make sure you can posi-

tively identify your foraged items. The moderator strongly discouraged foraging for mushrooms due to the chance of toxic misidentification.

That said, they discussed these commonly foraged desert plants: Elephant tree pepper, elderberry, yucca, wild chilepin (the mother of all peppers!), mullein, tansy leaf, red amaranth, lamb quarters, ironwood, wolfberry and juniper.

She learned that when you forage, you should never take the entire yield of berries or the entire plant, always leave plenty for the animals to feed. Also, embrace the push to eat invasive plants and fish: things like crawfish (in Arizona), mullein and lionfish. She came away with a recipe for acorn soup, a Native American dish that utilizes an ingredient we have plenty of here in Alabama.

During Tuning In on the West: Grapes, Cheese and Trailblazing Women in Wine

Betsy heard the panelists talk about their careers in wine and the paths they took to get to where they are today. Participants sampled four wines, and her favorite was a Mexican wine made from blood oranges and brandy. “This orange wine variety actually contained oranges, with a 16% ABV. Most orange wines are ‘orange’ due to the skin of the grape coming into contact with the juice.” She heard from:

- Dale Ott of Nossa Imports (She imports from Mexico and Portugal solely.)
- Doralice Handal of Denier-Handal Wines with a local tasting room in Healdsburg, CA (Sonoma). A collective of small vineyards share in the expenses of a tasting room and direct-to-consumer shipping.
- Kelly Comstock Ferris of Com-

stock Wines (Sonoma)

- Ziggy Eschliman, sommelier to the rock stars, who counts the bands Heart, Journey and The Rolling Stones as clients. “She paired wine with rock music,” Betsy says. “Viognier with Heart’s Crazy on You and orange wine with Aretha Franklin’s Respect.”

And Betsy shares “all things bubbles” from her **Bubbly Bliss** session.

“This was a great breakout session,” she says. “We tasted four different sparkling wines: two from the Champagne region of France and two from the U.S. To be called ‘Champagne’ there are certain requirements and for the grapes to be grown in Reims or Epernay in the Champagne Region of France. The process of making Champagne or sparkling wine is intense and involves several steps. Pressing/settling/fermentation/blending/bottling are part of the first process. Next steps are unique to Champagne or sparkling wine, secondary fermentation, riddling (concentration of the lees in the neck of the bottle), disgorgement (expulsion of the deposits gathered in the neck), dosage, corking and caging and labeling.

Vintage requires 36 months of aging; non-vintage: 15 months aging maximum.

Her tasting notes:

- Veuve Clicquot “Yellow” Label (50% Pinot Noir, 28% Chardonnay, 15% Pinot Meunier from France). “Widow Clicquot took over the wine business after the death of her husband; at the time, women were not allowed to own a business.” “Veuve” means widow; rhymes with “love.” The orange label is a patented label. She used a specific orange label on her Champagne because she wanted to verify it

was her bottles.

- Taittinger Brut La Francaise (40% Chardonnay, 35% Pinot Noir, 25% Pinot Meunier from France)

She also tasted Gruet Blanc de Noir (100% Pinot Noir from New Mexico) and Chandon By the Bay Blanc de Blancs (100% chardonnay from California).

“The price difference in Alabama between the Veuve Clicquot and Taittinger versus Gruet and Chandon are substantial, making Veuve and Taittinger celebratory beverages,” Betsy says. “I will use the Gruet in my mimosa on Saturday!!!”

Helpful hints.

Opening the bottle:

- When opening Champagne, turn the bottle not the cork.
- Always keep your hand over the cage as you untwist the wire.
- There are six twists to loosen a cage on a bottle of Champagne.

Perfect way to serve:

- If room temp, put the bottle in the fridge for 20 minutes.
- If in the fridge, take the bottle out for 20 minutes before serving.
- 55 degrees is the ideal temperature for bubbles.
- The cork can leave the bottle at 40 mph, so be careful!!

Which glass to use??

- Coupe
- Flute
- Wine

It’s your preference, but the flute best preserves the bubbles.

“In victory you deserve Champagne, in defeat you need it.”
—Napoleon Bonaparte

Giving Back—Impacting our Community

Sonthe Burge reports that this session showcased two non-profits in Arizona—C-CAP and Blue Watermelon.

- C-CAP (Careers through Culinary Arts Program): Annually, C-CAP provides culinary job and life skills to over 22,000 middle and high school students across the entire state of Arizona, as well as in Baltimore, Camden, Chicago, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Long Island, Newark, Philadelphia, Maryland and Washington DC. The program would love to expand to more cities.

C-CAP works to prepare students for college and career opportunities in the restaurant and hospitality industry.

- Blue Watermelon: This non-profit organization of chefs, restaurateurs, and community food advocates works with students, parents, and educators in the community to assist schools in rethinking relationships with food.

In Arizona over 35 schools participate and reach 5,000 students. They plant gardens in schools and have cooking demonstrations.

High schools have the “Chef in the Garden” program. Sonthe says, “It is a great innovative approach to learning about food and nutrition.”

Her big takeaway: “There are so many creative and innovative ways to give back. Find what your members are passionate about and make connections to your community.”



Above: Above, Dame Cristina Almanza, who also attended the St. Louis conference as a delegate, enjoyed catching up with Dame Janeen Sarlin from the New York chapter. At right: Leigh thoroughly enjoyed the chardonnay provided by LDEI



An Update from The WellHouse Committee

by Sonthe Burge

Even if you aren't on The WellHouse committee, there are still plenty of ways to help.

The WellHouse is one part of the Birmingham chapter's outreach efforts. Each month, Birmingham Dames teach a hands-on cooking class at The WellHouse for female survivors of human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

The LDEI WellHouse committee met on Wednesday, November 6th at Sorelle Café. Joy Smith treated members to a delicious lunch complete with her fabulous signature cheesecake. A huge thank you to Joy for such a special lunch!

This year, Dame Charbett Cauthen had the idea to create Blessing Bags for the residents of The WellHouse. Our chapter will be collecting new or gently used purses to give to the residents for Christmas; they can be brought to the LDEI Holiday party on December 16th at The Lumbar.

Please bring one purse filled with six to eight toiletries for the women. These can include gum, mints, lotion, hair accessories, lip balm, mini hand cream, mini hand sanitizers, tissue packs, a small mirror, or any other similar items.

Members of The WellHouse committee will deliver the purses along with some holiday cheer to The WellHouse on December 18th. If you have any questions, please reach out to Charbett who is leading this effort.

In other updates from the committee, Sonthe Burge has stepped down as co-chair of this committee to be replaced by Maureen Holt, who will be working with Pat Terry.



The WellHouse committee met at Joy Smith's Sorelle Café to make plans for future cooking classes and projects.

If you are interested in teaching monthly cooking classes, submitting recipes, or purchasing groceries for the classes, please get in touch with Maureen or Pat.

There is an on-boarding process that includes a background check and online training in order to volunteer with the residents. The entire process takes about an hour. Sixteen of the 24 committee members have completed this on-boarding process.

Last summer, cooking classes were hosted at Samford's Wellness Kitchen, a location that made it easier for Dames to volunteer while also giving the residents an opportunity to travel off of The WellHouse campus.

This coming summer, our chapter

hopes to continue this. Jenn Nix is sourcing a local kitchen to hold the classes. Get in touch with her with any ideas.

Pat Terry is creating a recipe binder for each resident.

In November, Kate Nicholson and Sonthe Burge showed the ladies how to make Easy Honey-Garlic Shrimp, Maple-Vanilla Baked Pears, and Lemon-Butter Broccoli Florets.

After the cooking class, Kate and Sonthe visited the new barn on campus, which houses Shop-Well, and did a little Christmas shopping. When you shop the Shop-Well store, you are providing income for women at The WellHouse. Check out www.shopwell-wellhouse.org for gifts.

Ways You Can Help The WellHouse

- **Blessing Bags:** Donate a new or gently used purse that includes 6 to 8 toiletries. Bring the filled purses to the LDEI Holiday Party on December 16.
- **Shop at Shop-Well.** This store, which is onsite at The WellHouse campus, provides income for the residents. You can also shop online at www.shopwell-wellhouse.org.

A Mallorca Wedding is Magnifique!

by Leigh Sloss-Corra

Over the years, my husband and I have been fortunate to attend weddings in some fabulous locations. This summer, we headed to Mallorca, where the daughter of his Australian cousins was getting married.

Mallorca is an indescribably beautiful and historic island off the eastern coast of Spain that some Americans have heard of but not many have visited. It is, conversely, a top-of-the-list destination for British, Germans, and other international travelers.

We thought we were travelling to a charming beachside town, but it turned out we were wrong. Palma de Mallorca, where we stayed, is a huge port city with a subway

system, and an airport that welcomes over 12 million travellers each year. The “old town” area where we stayed was bustling too, with loads of tourists and sports fans, since Spain was featured in the World Cup final. Lucky for us our hosts selected a gorgeous hotel on a quiet side-street, elegant, luxurious and surprisingly affordable. Since both sides of the family are foodies and aficionados of high living, no expense was spared throughout the weekend. No dish was ordinary, no aspect overlooked or less than the best. The bride and groom are from Australia, work in London and Tokyo, and have friends all over the world—a very international crowd. They are a little older, almost in their 40s, so the proceedings were a bit more civilized. They dressed nicely, and talked about work or their kids. But, after a few drinks,



The view of the Mediterranean Sea from the shore in downtown Palma. Sailboats of all sizes take advantage of the steady breezes.

they cut loose, and were wilder and louder than teenagers. Quite a crowd.

The Hotel Born, a centuries-old palazzo, where we stayed, was perfection, with dreamy beds, gorgeous furnishings, amazing service, and an incredible complimentary breakfast (not that we needed it). At any time, we could just go downstairs to the courtyard and find someone in our group already situated with drinks, snacks, and a plan for the day or evening.

The first day, the parents of the bride booked a minivan to take several of us to explore the beaches, followed by a late lunch at a picturesque seaside restaurant. Everything looked and felt like a James Bond movie. The photos give you an idea. That night was the after-rehearsal party. The location should have been a well-known, posh,

snazzy bar, but they cancelled at the last minute (!). Luckily the bride and groom found a stylish dive bar with amazing food, drinks, and music so loud we thought we'd be deaf for the rest of the trip. That lasted until 1 a.m. We walked back to the hotel and slept like rocks.

The next morning, the day of the wedding, we did some sight-seeing. The second largest gothic cathedral in Europe was only a few blocks from our hotel—breath-taking! In the afternoon we headed to the wedding location, an old fortress overlooking the sea, about 20 minutes from our hotel. It was insanely luxurious, with expansive views of the sea on three sides. The sun blazed late into the afternoon, and the temperature was so hot we literally almost melted. How did we get through it? There were so many stories, always champagne, and way



Left: The second largest gothic cathedral in Europe is in Mallorca—spectacular! Top right: Seafood risotto at a seaside restaurant did not disappoint. Below right: There were several opportunities to jump into the sea from the catamaran the day after the wedding. The “recovery cruise” worked!



too much luscious food—beautifully presented and delicious. After the dinner and speeches, we found our way to a sort of grotto/underground dance club for dancing. Also very James Bond. The music was blaring, the dancing insane, and we probably were some of the first to leave at 2 a.m.

The next day, we were instructed to be at the city marina by noon for an afternoon cruise on a giant catamaran. Most of the 100 guests who boarded with us were impatient for a “hair of the dog” Aperol spritz or 2 or 3 or 4. There was a band and a DJ. While the boat sailed around the harbor, we luxuriated in the sun, enjoyed incredible food and many drinks, jumped into the sea at various spots for a swim and marvelled

at the young guests’ ability to drink and eat so much while still looking so good and dancing to the deafening “thump thump” of the DJ.

The sailboat didn’t return to shore until 7 p.m., but the festivities were not over. The family of the bride and groom and a few friends, including us, gathered at a nearby gastropub around 10 p.m. for supper. Our group sampled every dish on the menu, enjoyed countless bottles of refreshing sangria and wine, and again we were probably the first to leave around 1 a.m. Amazing.

My husband and I stayed an extra day in Mallorca to recover and explore, while the rest of the wedding party and guests returned home or left for a few days to visit

Barcelona. We slept in the next morning, toured a landmark castle overlooking the city in the afternoon, followed by an hours-long walk through the idyllic streets. We were sad to be leaving early the next morning, so enjoyed our last spectacular meal at a Michelin-star restaurant that was literally right next to our hotel. Oysters, calamari, gorgeous drinks, and every bite delicious and beautifully presented.

Mallorca was an easy place to fall in love with and we can’t wait to return one day and explore the rest of the island. Its treasures are secret only to Americans, so I recommend you visit soon. You’re guaranteed to be welcomed, well-fed and full of wonder, just like us.

DIY Phoenix

by Susan Swagler

The 2024 LDEI Conference introduced us to fabulous Phoenix, Arizona, but our free time was limited. Here are some vetted ideas to make your own trip to Phoenix delicious and fun.

•••

The International Conference doesn't allow much time for exploring the host city, but we managed to find some great places to eat before we got down to business. Likewise, there was only so much time to enjoy the exciting excursions organized by the Phoenix chapter; actually, we each only had time for one! And I couldn't find anyone to go hiking with me.

So maybe another trip to Phoenix is in order. Here's what I'll be doing when I go back soon with my husband who wants to go *right now* after hearing about our fantastic food adventures.

Foodwise

- The Fry Bread House (4545 N. 7th Ave. Phoenix, AZ 85013)

This little café specializing in Native American food is a James Beard Classics winner and multiple “Best of Phoenix” winner. Fresh off the plane, we went here for lunch and sampled pillowy fry bread stuffed with meats, beans, cheese and lettuce.

Several of us got the day's special of carnitas in that amazing fry bread. The most popular dish—the combo with beef (spiced to your liking), beans, cheese and lettuce—also was delicious. The place is small and cozy with indoor seat-



Above: We cooked our own dinner of Thai hot pot soup on the table-top grills at Mr. Baan's Bar & Mookata. At right: The Smashy Burger at Chilte was a huge hit—big enough so everyone had a bite!



ing surrounded by native art and empowerment posters and outdoor seating at picnic tables in a small cactus garden.

There was a woman selling jewelry there, too, and some of us bought her handmade items including traditional bracelets made with ghost beads and earrings made from luminous abalone shells. Perfect souvenirs!

- Mr. Baan's Bar and Mookata (218 E. Portland St. Phoenix, AZ 85004)

There are not too many places in the country where you cook your own barbecue around a moat of broth to create your own hot pot. Actually, there are exactly three, and we went to one of them for dinner! Mr. Baan's was recently named one of the best restaurants in the entire country (and the only one in Arizona to make that cut) by the *New York Times*.

Mr. Baan's specializes in charcoal-grilled Thai barbecue.

“Mookata” translates to “pork on a grill” and is a cook-it-yourself barbecuing experience. It consists of a domed grill surrounded by a moat of broth, which is enriched by the drippings of the cooking meat. A mookata set comes with various marinated meats (steak, chicken, pork), rice noodles, fresh vegetables (cabbage, peppers, onions, enoki mushrooms), eggs and dipping sauces.

We started our culinary adventure in the bar with inventive cocktails infused with the flavors of Thai foods. My favorite: the Ooey and Tooeey with tequila, coriander, cucumber, lime, fish sauce and Thai chili tincture. The Madam Madam (with vodka, lemongrass, lemon, lychee and soda) also was delicious. Then we went to our table on the patio where we got a short tutorial about how to do this thing (including punching holes in raw eggs with chopsticks to incorporate scrambled eggs into the broth).

In celebration of Dame Dulce Rivera's birthday, they brought us a round of orchid-topped, coconut-scented Thai shots to toast her.

The night was beautiful, the space was lovely with fresh desert air and festive lighting, and our DIY hot pots were filled with exactly what we wanted and spiced individually with two amazing sauces.

It was a memorable and totally new way to celebrate our time together.

- Cocina 10 at Crescent Ballroom (308 N. 2nd Ave. Phoenix, AZ 85003)

We made our way to this restaurant and ballroom music venue in a 1917 garage after the cocktail welcome party that officially opened the conference.

Cocina 10 serves Arizona cooking made from traditional recipes



Above: The Fry Bread House was the first stop after arrival. The fry bread “burrito” was generously sized, but no one had trouble finishing theirs.

Right: The cocktails at Mr. Baan's Bar and Mookata were all beautifully garnished with flowers and fruit. They brought orchid-topped Thai shots to celebrate Dame Dulce Rivera's birthday.



inspired by life along I-10 and the people and places that surround it. There are tons of vegetarian and vegan options, too. Several of our members specifically asked for Sonoran food and we got it—including the locally famous, bacon-wrapped Sonoran hotdogs and \$5 barbacoa tacos. We also loved the Tajin-rimmed house margaritas; the crispy, chip-like fries; and every taco. A bonus: There was a free vintage clothing and vinyl night market going on in the ballroom the evening we visited!

• Chilte (765 Grand Ave. Phoenix, AZ 85007)
We have the algorithm gods to thank for this culinary outing—and Dame Lindsey Noto-King. Lindsey saw on Instagram that Chef Lawrence “LT” Smith had recently been named a *Food & Wine* Best New Chef, so she DM'd the former-football-player-turned-chef and asked for a last-minute table. Chef LT was in New York helping reimagine Taco Bell's Crunchwrap Supreme, but his

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amazing team—Front of House Lead Erin Stamps and Operating Partner Chris Benitez—invited us right in and took exceptional care of us.

The food at Chilte—located in the retro Egyptian Motor Hotel—is wildly delicious and insanely inventive. Mexican at its heart with global reach (yuca frites with furikake, fried sweet plantains with za'atar), the underlying authenticity of the menu made Dames Cristina Almanza and Dulce Rivera homesick for Mexico. The place is named for the spicy native chiltepin chiles that end up in a lot of the dishes here.

We started with Palomas (reposado tequila, maleza cempasuchil, grapefruit, yuzu, hibiscus and pink peppercorn syrup with a black-pepper-and-salt garnish the length of our tall glasses) and ended with espresso-infused carajillos. Oh, and there were shots of sotol (made from dasylirion, a desert succulent) in between. We sampled the quesabirria tacos with squid ink corn tortillas and miso consommé, cucumbers dressed in a sweet and spicy salsa macha, mussels and escabeche, classic green aquachile with wild shrimp from Mexico, flautas with deep and rich mole, and green chorizo vampiro (a marrow bone topped with green-chile chorizo over a tortilla caramelized with queso and salsa macha). We passed the Smashy Burger with homemade spicy chayote pickles from hand to hand, and we so enjoyed the MSG (chef's choice of meat, sauce and garnish), a large-format dish that changes frequently but was dry-aged Duroc pork tomahawk when we visited.

We ended the meal with a rich slice of pan de elote cheesecake,



The distinctive saguaro cactus is an iconic symbol of the Sonoran Desert.

topped with fresh flowers and garnished with salsa macha, and some incredible chocolate something with habanero ice cream. It all was, in a word, amazing.

Lodging

We stayed at the stunningly beautiful Wigwam Resort for the conference, but this made every trip to dinner a 30-minute car ride each way! And that Phoenix traffic is truly beyond description if I don't use curse words. If you or your partner love to golf, go to the Wigwam. But when I go back, I'm planning to stay at a place downtown so I'm closer to the restaurants.

To-Dos

As far as things to do and see, I'm taking a cue from the locals. Some of the excursions organized and offered by the Phoenix chapter of LDEI will inform my next trip out west. Also, I'm packing my hiking boots, which are Salomon's X Ultra Mid Gore-Tex, and I highly recommend.

Here's what I plan to do:

- Desert Botanical Garden (1201 N. Galvin Parkway, Phoenix, AZ 85008) This colorful celebration of the Sonoran Desert spans 140 acres and features more than 50,000 plants displays with more than 99,000 herbarium species, 4,482 species in the Living Collections and more than 544 rare and endangered species. The Garden has nature paths, hiking trails and is dedicated to the conservation and research and exhibition of desert plants.
- Heard Museum (2301 N. Central Ave. Phoenix, AZ 85004) This museum, founded in 1929 and committed to the advancement of American Indian art and the artists who make it, spotlights traditional as well as contemporary artwork. There's beadwork, baskets, pottery, prints, fashion, jewelry and paintings here. The Heard Museum has 12 galleries featuring American Indian art and exhibitions, an outdoor sculpture gallery, a world-class museum shop (supporting local

working artists) and an outdoor café.

The desert beckons in Phoenix, and I love to hike. The Phoenix Sonoran Preserve with its variety of cacti over 9,600 acres might be my first outing. Located north of the city, the newest area in Phoenix's famed Sonoran Desert preserve sys-

tem features 36 miles of trails in the wild, mostly undeveloped desert.

South Mountain Park and Preserve has petroglyphs. I love petroglyphs! So much! The Holbert Trail is considered the best one for this, but it is a difficult trail I'll need to train for.

The two-mile Waterfall Trail in the White Tank Mountain Regional Park sounds easier and has ancient petroglyphs, too.

This is enough to fill a full long weekend. I'm booking my next trip now.

Letter, continued from page 1

served fabulous cocktails, which we all enjoyed in addition to the bubbly!! Pepper Place became "Party Place" thanks to Dames Leslie Register and Dulce Rivera and the other Dames who helped with the design, hospitality, and bar committees. I love the new look and vibe! Kudos to Dame Leigh Sloss-Corra for the work you did to secure proper permits and licenses. Quite a time-consuming job, for sure!

A big thank you to the Dames who prepared items for the event. Billie Jo Waara, Joy Smith, Kay Reed, Rita Bernhardt, Kathy G. Mezrano, Ashley McMakin, Geri-Martha O'Hara, Betsy McAtee, Lindsey Noto-King, Deborah Stone, Alex Flowers, and Idie Hastings. THANK YOU to every Dame who supported and worked this event. Champagne & Fried Chicken could not happen without you! A very special thank you to our most wonderful chair Kathy G. Mezrano for her vision and leadership of this successful event.

In October, I attended the LDEI Annual Conference in Phoenix, Arizona. The conference was inspiring and impressive. We had seven Dames attend from our chapter, four delegates plus three other attendees. Between the seven of us, we covered a lot of ground and attended most of the sessions. Some of the biggest takeaways for me came from the leadership session, which all of your delegates attended. An impressive

panel of Dames reflected on the belief that inclusive leadership work begins with empathy, self-awareness, and giving grace. We participated in a very effective activity designed to strengthen our empathy muscle.

Dame Robin Griffith, a consultant who specializes in membership engagement, told us that members want a personal connection. Her advice is to get out your phone and call members. That's simple enough, right? Dame Tanya Holland closed the session by reminding us that we are in the business of hospitality. (Let's never forget that.) I am all for a hospitality committee. Are you?

Another impressive takeaway from conference is learning that our Birmingham chapter is one of the best! Our chapter was called out at the delegate meeting and recognized for our accomplishments. What an honor to be recognized! All thanks to the wonderful, positive, and hard-working Birmingham Dames who have served in leadership positions over the past 11 years. The important work we do truly makes a difference and is noticed! See Dame Susan Swagler's article in this newsletter for more conference news.

One thing most evident to me as our chapter grows, is our needs change. Our chapter has 111 members each blessed with unique gifts of time, talent, and treasure. Engaging members and recognizing their gifts was another hot topic at the annual conference. So, I am asking today:

What are your gifts and strengths, and where do they fit within our organization?

Many of you have already reached out to me, which I am very thankful for. Based on what I am hearing from Dames, I would love to create three new committees, a hospitality committee, a network committee, and a fundraising committee. I even think our chapter would benefit from a special strategic plan committee or task force to address specific issues like communication, membership, inclusiveness, professional development, and more.

I have been a member of LDEI since 2016, and one of the most special things about our chapter is how we all come together to serve our community. Giving back is at the core of what we do and is the right thing to do. Think, Pepper Place Market Takeover, Fiesta Scholarship, FOOD+Culture, Champagne & Fried Chicken, Community Food Bank of Central Alabama, The WellHouse, LDEI committee meetings, and the Annual Conference all in two months! Could "giving back" be our new superpower? I believe it is!!

I hope to see everyone at The Lumbar on December 16th for our Annual Holiday Party. We are collecting purses, "Blessing Bags," and toiletries for the WellHouse. Keep reading the newsletter for details.

Lots of love,
Sonthe

Let's Toast

Kimberly McNair Brock's Bitty's Living Kitchen is going brick and mortar after seven years.



What began as Birmingham's first "build-your-own salad" concept has evolved into one of the city's premier plant-based meal prep businesses.

Bitty's Living Kitchen is poised to open in the Five Points West area. The new space will offer plant-based grab-and-go options, including juices, Bitty's Living Meal Plans, plant-based remedies, tastings, cooking classes, and wellness consultations. Brock looks forward to continuing her mission to provide accessible plant-based nutrition and holistic wellness to the Birmingham community.

Maureen Holt has recently taken over Dame Susan Green's operation, now called Birmingham Alabama Knife Sharpening with her partner, Teresa Virciglio Holmes.

They'll be at Pepper Place Market most of next year, but also some over the holidays—if it's not raining! They make house calls and restaurant calls. Get in touch with her at southerngraze@gmail.com or 205-532-2121



Katie Cornutt, owner of Rolls Bakery, is partnering with a local church to help provide breakfast for the homeless community.



Dulce Rivera was named a member of the Leadership Birmingham class of 2025. This prestigious program brings together a group of 50 leaders from diverse backgrounds in the Birmingham community who spend the year learning and exchanging ideas about the issues and challenges facing our region in order to be more effective as leaders.



Jan Walsh is celebrating the one-year anniversary of CulinaryCartoons.com, with an online store and "That Guy!" merch.



Emily Roy is now offering private chef services: in-home cooking classes, small private dinners, and pop-up dinners.



Events Calendar

Thursday, December 5	YWCA Birmingham Miracle on 23rd Street Preview Party YWCA Gymnasium 309 23rd Street North	Dame volunteers welcome 4:30-6:30 p.m.
Monday, December 16	LDEI Holiday Party \$35 per person Must be paid in advance	The Lumbar More details to come
January	Micro-events each week of the month	More details to come
Friday, February 14	Sweet Treats fundraiser	The Market at Pepper Place

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