

PANACHE

Newsletter of Les Dames d'Escoffier Chicago

JUDITH SCHAD—ARTISAN WRIT LARGE

By Carrie Nahabedian



Spring means many things to many people—bird songs, young love, crocuses popping out of the ground, new beginnings. Spring is also deeply evocative of pastoralism—scenes of cows going out to pasture, sheep grazing in the foothills, and goats feasting in the mountains. It is the season that Brad Kessler describes in his thought-provoking book, Goat Song:

“Early June. The mountains turn tender green this time of year, the skies become enamel blue. The goats wear bells around their necks while we hike up Mason’s Hill. There’s eight of us today—seven goats, one human. We step through salad greens and the goats taste everything in sight: steeplebush, wild strawberries, buttercups, blackberry vines. We’re heading to the mountains soon.

*Wind takes the trees. Clouds float shadows through the grass. We enter the woods and the goats eat ash, birch, and maple. This evening I’ll milk the does back in the barn and when the sun goes down I’ll make an aged cheese from their milk called *atomme*. And find this day again inside its rind; the aromatic grass, the leaves, this wind.”*

Kessler’s thoughts are the inspiration for this issue, where we celebrate spring and the cheeses that we enjoy all year long. We profile an Indiana member, Judith Schad, and her reputation as an artisanal cheesemaker, and honor cheese purveyor and importer, Sophia Solomon, a staunch supporter of the Chicago chapter for many years and generous contributor to many of our events and social gatherings. We also feature Candace Warner, cheese enthusiast and retailer of fine cheeses at the Convito Café and Market. And we do it with Panache.

Judith is an artisan, her craft is cheese and her fans are worldwide. What others just talk about—sustainable, natural, humane animal management, free-farmed, and terroir—Judith lives everyday

In 1976, Judith and her husband Larry were living in Louisville, Kentucky, when they decided to buy an 80-acre farm in Indiana. Set in the heart of “Kentuckiana” in the Southern Indiana Hills, the Schads discovered when they ran the title on the farmland, that the farm had actually belonged to Larry’s great, great grandfather in the mid 1800’s. This was a stunning discovery and the Schads built a log home over the foundation of the old homestead. They knew nothing about farming or farm animals, but with three children, they knew they had to fill the farm with animals and lots of them. Chickens, rabbits, sheep, ducks, cattle, Angora goats and dairy goats were their new family.

Very quickly though, the dairy goats, independent, mischievous and loving, stole their hearts! But Judith couldn’t get their children to drink the goat’s milk no matter how hard she tried and thus began Judith’s life as a cheese maker. It was an extension of the family kitchen and grew naturally from her love of fresh, simple food. The “Goat Girls” as Judith called the goats, gave her children a connection to the land. Early on, the cheese was made at a nearby orchard and winery as a “Show and Tell” cheeserie. However, after years of hauling the milk from one farm to another, the Schads quickly realized the only way to go was to become a true farmstead cheese maker.

Abby Mandel and Chef Jean Joho of Everest were early supporters of Judith’s Capriole Farm Cheese at the Best of the Midwest Market held in Chicago in the late 80’s to early 90’s. It was here that Judith first met Alice Waters and became involved with the food scene both in Chicago and the nation. This was pivotal since at the time Laura Chenel in California and Coach Farms were the leading producers of goat cheese. But, Judith was attracted to the French ripened cheeses and when she met the renowned cheese affinier, Chantal Plasse, who had trained with Pierre Androuet, France’s leading cheese purveyor, Judith began to experiment with mold-ripened



Judith Shad and friends

President's Message



Dear Chicago Dames,

The world seems alive with new possibilities in the springtime, especially in Chicago when the sound of a puddle splashing is such a welcome reminder that we made it through another winter. Spring also seems the perfect time to revisit what makes our organization so vibrant and alive. I urge you to consider refreshing your involvement in some of our chapter's initiatives.

Our new mentorship program is about sharing our experiences to inspire the next generation of culinary professionals. The program has been designed to allow our members to participate in many different ways that suit their expertise and the amount of time they wish to share.

This new program has allowed us to enrich our giving in a meaningful way far beyond the financial resources we dedicate to scholarships. There are three simple ways to get involved.

1. Become a personal mentor where you reach out to one of our scholarship recipients and offer to share your insight and experience.
2. Host a culinary tour where you offer a field trip to your restaurant, factory, farm, test kitchen, retail store or any other venue where you can share your story.
3. Invite a scholarship recipient to be your guest at an appropriate Les Dames function where you serve as their guide to learning and expanding their network.

And it all comes full circle, because scholarship recipients who participate in the mentorship program are invited to "give back" by inspiring the youth at the Boys & Girls Club by lending a hand with the Green Tables Project. We have already had a culinary school graduate who was a member of the Boys & Girls Club provide a demo and share her story with the kids at the garden project. The sheer joy of it is captured in photos you can see on our website.

I have considered being a member of Les Dames Chicago a joy and privilege since day one, and I am still awestruck by the amazing accomplished women who revel in making a difference that I meet through this organization. Even more powerful than our accomplishments is the joy of sharing with the next generation.

If you want to talk about the many rewarding ways you can be involved, contact a committee chair or just call me. It is a great way to refresh and enrich your life and many others this spring.

Sincerely,

Sharon Olson

Postscript:

Diane Sokolofski's father Charles Kase passed away, and he was buried on February 7 in Cleveland, Ohio.

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cheeses with particular rinds. In one spectacular year 1994-1995, Judith's Capriole Farms introduced five new cheeses! That same year, Judith brought the cheeses to New York's Fancy Food Show in the booth of La Fermes Chantal Plasse. This was the real coming out party for Capriole Farm Cheese. The French cheese makers couldn't believe they were from Indiana. They loved Judith so much she went to France with Dame Sofia Solomon and was named "Prudhomme" in La Guilde des Fromagers and was asked to judge the French Cheese Competitions in St. Remy and St. Maure.

Judith is a true visionary and steward of the land. Capriole Farm has grown to include over 475 Alpine, Saanen, and Nubian goats. She employs and teaches agriculture students from around the US and abroad about being a farmstead cheese maker. Their home is on the farm and Judith is "hands on" with the daily responsibilities of running a world- renowned cheese making operation. Capriole Farm makes fresh, ripened, and aged chevre cheese by hand, using both raw milk and pasteurized, using milk only from their herd. While this by definition means farmstead, what it really means is that the land, the animals and the cheese *own* the Schad's. Judith is thinking about a washed rind cheese wrapped in leaves for the future. But her main concentration now is doing what they do better and consistently. In her own words, "Everything is a piece here; overlook one piece and the entire fabric falls apart. Fortune—or the lack of it—has given us a demanding gift, a sense of who we are in relation to the land and the wilderness around us, a huge respect for the animals who give us so much, and for the demanding craft of cheese making."

The cheeses of Capriole Farm have great names that literally inspired the cheese itself, and they illustrate Judith's love of literature and the many personal connections in her life; *O'BANON*, *PIPER'S PYRAMIDE*, *WABASH CANNONBALL*, *CROCODILE TEAR*, *OLD KENTUCKY TOMME*, *MONT ST. FRANCIS*, *JULIANA*, and *SOFIA*, a wonderful rich and ash marbled cheese named after noted Chicago cheese purveyor Sofia Solomon.

The awards that Capriole Farm has won are numerous. Judith is an avid participant at many local Farmer's markets, including Chicago's Green City Market. Judith is a member of Slow Food, where she presides over the raw Milk Presidium for the American Cheese Society. She is active in The Southern Food Alliance, preserving the integrity of the South and the food of the region. And since 2009 she has been a member of Les Dames d'Escoffier Chicago.

Sofia, "the cheese lady."

By Jill Van Cleave

Sofia Solomon doesn't need to use her surname with customers, nor does she need to add her last name for recognition among people in the food and wine industry, at least not in the Chicago area. This "cheese lady" is so well respected among chefs in our city that when one of her cheeses is listed on a restaurant menu, her first name is often added to it. Judith Schad of Capriole created a cheese named "Sofia," in her honor.

Sofia started her importing company, Tekla, Inc., in 1979 when she began working with her husband at Leonard Solomon's Wines & Spirits on the corner of Chicago Ave. and LaSalle St. (Tekla is her late mother's name.) Tekla imported

Iranian caviar, and in 1981, began distributing for Petrossian in the Midwest. Leonard, always an innovator with big ideas, was the first Chicago retailer to import cheese by air shipment directly from France, many of them raw milk cheeses.

Chicagoans had not tasted cheeses this fresh outside of France. Consequently education and providing tasting samples became the marketing strategy for selling these cheeses. Sofia, a sponge for knowledge, learned a great deal about French cheese in a very short period of time. (Another remarkable quality in Sofia's favor is her ability to distinguish superior products by smell and taste with accurate recall.) Oh, and did I mention that her French pronunciation is flawless?

I have known Sofia for over 30 years. I worked for Leonard and Sofia at their store on LaSalle as charcuterie chef. One of Leonard's big ideas was to sell gourmet box lunches that contained slices of terrine, ratatouille or celery root remoulade, perfect slices or wedges of imported French cheese, and a slice of freshly baked apple tart. Customers were

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Sophia Solomon

bowled over by these boxed treats. When the store closed - sadly ahead of its time - Sofia focused her energy on growing her company and expanding its list of imported specialty foods for wholesale distribution to the food industry.

“Sophia” continued from page 3

Sofia’s demanding standards for quality products helped launch a number of brands in the Chicago market, among them Petrossian, Villa Monadori balsamic vinegar, Olio Verde Extra-Virgin Olive oil, A L’Olivier Olive Oils and Vinegars, and Badia a Coltibuono Extra-Virgin Olive Oil (the Badia connection came about through an introduction initiated by late Dame Abby Mandel).

Sofia’s dedication to seeking out artisan products adhering to traditional methods of preparation led her to include cheeses in Tekla’s repertoire beginning in 1992. At first, she specialized in importing the finest French artisanal cheeses from affineur Chantal Plasse. She later added a selection of Spanish and Italian farmstead cheeses, and then highly-acclaimed American farmstead cheeses.

4 The first American cheese maker who caught Sofia’s attention was Judith Schad of Capriole, whom she met on a cheese trip to Europe. Judith’s in-depth questions for European cheese makers convinced Sofia that she should take a serious look at the products of this Indiana-rooted producer.

For American cheese makers, Sofia sees a strong movement towards artisanal production with respect to artistry of craft and geography, or “gout de terroir,” made economically sustainable within a localized grassroots endeavor. Flavor is the driver now, more so than the technical side of production.

Fortunately for Chicago area cheese-loving professionals and consumers, Sofia is doing the hard work of sourcing it for us. Be sure to ask where you can find her cheeses in restaurants, hotels and retail markets. Food professionals should make an appointment to visit her warehouse and cheese cave. Sofia has been a member of the Chicago Chapter since her induction in 1983.

Make Mine Grilled Cheese: Candace Warner’s Love Affair with Cheese

By Joan Reardon

Imagine the scene. The year was 1993 and Candace Barocci, had left the University of Wisconsin in Madison to spend a year abroad in Aix-en-Provence. Living only a few steps from the round-about and fountain La Rotonde at the west end of the Cours Mirabeau, she daily passed three more splashing fountains along Aix’s half-mile-long main street that ends with a statue of King Rene, where flowing water fills a basin for all to use. The wide elegant Cours, then as now, is flanked by a double row of plane trees and the facades of seventeenth and eighteenth century town houses whose ground floors have become shops, offices and cafes. Shoppers, Gucci-clad motor scooter aficionados and students from the University of Aix are everywhere. Candace sits in a green cast iron chair at one of the little marble-topped tables on the terrace of the Deux Garçons eating her favorite meal—Brie and a baguette.

How did this bright-eyed, linguistically-talented, young woman travel the distance from the University of Aix to become a partner of the Convito Café and Market, the original import, wine, carry-out, Italian specialty shop/café that her mother Nancy Barocci Brussat opened 30 years ago?

Born to parents, who her mother tags Wisconsin “cheese heads” and graduates of the University of Wisconsin, the abundance and variety of that State’s cheeses were a part of Candace’s childhood. “I would choose a grilled cheese sandwich over a hamburger any day,” she says. Although her mother, often exhausted by a long day at Convito, frequently prepared lamb or pork chops or steaks as a “doable and fast meal” for her family, Candace from early on chose cheese, “even good-old, bright-yellow American.”

Living in Provence only re-enforced her preferences and palate for cheeses. Not only did Candace come to know and appreciate French cheeses, but she also learned how they were made. The artisanal factor deeply impressed her, as did France. After graduation from college, she gravitated toward a position as a part of an organization that specialized in cross-cultural training for corporate executives who were re-locating in foreign cities. Four years later, her mother asked her to join the Convito team as general manager. It seemed foreordained. Convito Italiano had been a part of her growing up since she was nine-years-old, when she could identify the various kinds of pastas and recommend sauces to patrons by just hanging around the store. To manage Convito and then Betise a few years later was an opportunity to hone her marketing skills and learn more about specialty products, especially cheese.

A quick study, she worked first with employee and specialist Reysa Samuels until Reysa left Convito for the Marcy Street Market at Sam’s. As newly named business manager, Candace set to work to supply Plaza del Lago shoppers with a range of fine cheeses that she paired with Convito’s wines and introduced into the café’s menu. Realizing that she could not compete with Whole Foods and much



Candace Warner

larger chain stores, she developed a relationship with her vendors, researched the Fancy Food Shows in New York City, and acquired a cheese vocabulary that included her personal favorites, Saxon Creamery Green Fields and Academia Barilla Parmigiano Reggiano, “Twenty-four month is really my favorite,” she says with a I’m-sharing-my-secret-with-you smile. Although she cannot offer customers as many artisanal soft cheeses as she would like, she does sell an excellent selection with an international as well as a domestic range

Fine cheeses not only occupy her professional life, they also are a part of her personal life. For years, Candace and her family have observed a traditional Holiday Cheese Party between Christmas and New Years. The first course served to both children and adults includes seafood—shrimp, smoked salmon and trout, and shellfish. When the children go to bed, the adults enjoy a second course consisting of Sophia Solomon’s special cheeses, baguettes, and big, amazing, red wines, ending the evening with nuts and fruit.

In Candace’s world, the magical fountains of Aix are still music to her ears, Wisconsin artisans and their products are a part of her inheritance, and her mother’s passion for Italy is honored with a cosmopolitan twist.

Joan and Julia

By Nancy Brussat

For culinary historian and author Joan Reardon the winter months have been filled with events celebrating her new book *As Always, Julia*, featuring the riveting correspondence between Julia Child and her literary mentor, Avis DeVoto. Joan’s superb editing and commentary combined with the letters paint a picture of America on the verge of political, social and gastronomic transformation. Reviews have been spectacular.

Three of the events featuring the book were held in Les Dame establishments.

A Conversation with Joan Reardon The House of Glunz November 28

A cozy Sunday supper hosted by Dame Barbara Glunz and Dame Nancy Brussat featured Julia’s recipe for Soup au Pistou prepared by Convito Café Chef Noe Sanchez, served with excellent wines from the House of Glunz and amazing French cheeses from Dame Sofia Solomon of Tekla. Joan signed books and then charmed her audience with back-stories of her research for the book and other culinary adventures.



Barbara Glunz, Nancy Brussat, and Joan Reardon

A Celebration of Joan, George, Sarah and Julia Prairie Fire December 7

Dame Sarah Stegner and partner George Bumbaris based their menu on Julia Child’s “Mastering the Art of French Cooking”. The ChicaGourmet sponsored event began with sparkling wine and gougères while Joan talked with guests

and signed copies of her book. Other featured dishes were Dover Sole, tableside tossed Caesar Salad, Chicken Roulade and the famous Reine de Saba. Dame Veronica Hastings selected the wines.



Sarah Stegner and Joan Reardon

As Always, Julia Luncheon Naha January 15

Dame Carrie Nahabedian’s clever four-course menu played off many of the quotes from the Julia and Avis letters. “It behooves us to choose eggs carefully and to treat them right” said Julia. Carrie’s Salad of Curly Frisee and Slab Bacon, Coddled Hen’s Egg with Black Truffles from Perigord, Foie Gras Toast and Fine Herbs did just that. The event sponsored by ChicaGourmet & Culinary Historians of Chicago also featured wines selected by Michael Nahabedian.

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Carrie Nahabedian and Joan Reardon

Pre-Holiday Brunch

By Nancy Brussat

The Pre-Holiday Brunch this year was held on December 11th at Dame Ina Pinkney's cozy and comfortable restaurant Ina's. Ina warmly welcomed 22 dames and talked about the restaurant's philosophy of being a "nurturing environment that feeds the soul" as well as her insistence on using only the freshest of ingredients. We all enjoyed her widely acclaimed sour cream coffee cake, sipped coffee and then ordered dishes off Ina's menu – everything from her signature Scrapple and Heavenly Hots to the special omelets of the day. It was the perfect way to begin the holiday season.



Ina Pinkney, Brenda McDowell, and Marilyn Wilkinson

Mad Men Party

By Veronica Hastings

The Les Dames Post Holiday Potluck Party theme this year was "Mad Men" hosted by Dame Sara Reddington on January 23, 2011. Entering her fabulous house we knew why. A Mid Century Modern design with a stunning fireplace and an almost horse shoe shaped bar that the art directors of Mad Men wished that they had to film the series in enchanted us all. Sara's enterprising husband Geoff is an avid collector of all things of that era



Shrimp Cocktail

so every corner and surface of the house was amazing to behold.

Dame Suzanne Florek stole the show with her stunning ensemble and if January Jones saw her she would be green with envy. The rest of us were quite a sight as well with everyone flourishing candy cigarettes. However the bar was definitely the place to be not only for the great cocktails and wine but the array of shining barware.

Many of the dishes served were a fun mix of old school shrimp cocktail, little wieners in pastry buns, ham and cheese wrapped green onions complemented by upscale versions of shrimp and avocado ceviche and an avocado and jicama dip.



Hostess Sara Reddington and Susan Florek

Sara Reddington's Banditos were created during an afternoon of Christmas cookie baking with her two sisters. They all share a love for the sweet-salty combination and after making chocolate dipped pretzels and chocolate covered potato chips they decided to try dipping Fritos in Chocolate and discovered it was delicious! So Banditos were born and are now a Christmas tradition in their family.

For more photos and "Mad Men" recipes, visit our website <http://lesdameschicago.org>

Behind the Label: From Seed to Table

By Nancy Brussat

Expertly produced by Dame Tami Mizrahi, "Behind the Label: From Seed to Table" was a spectacular opening to the Chicago Chapter's 2011 Program Schedule. Ring Master and world-renowned chef Charlie Trotter led the evening's activities with expertise and humor.

This flawlessly staged evening began when guests were greeted at the door by Chef Trotter and Dame Mizrahi, presented with an enchanting Limoncello and Champagne Cocktail



Keli Fayard's dessert: Hazelnut Financier with Coconut Oolong Tea Ice Cream and Coconut Caviar

appropriately named the Mizrahi Cocktail (see our website for recipe) and escorted to the studio kitchen where an effervescent crowd enjoyed a magnificent selection of canapés including such exotic combinations as Chestnut Soup Shooter with Crispy Rice & Sage as well as Lobster Sausage with Coconut & Red Curry. Chef Trotter introduced his cast of players who would throughout the evening, provide guests with food, beverages and entertainment: Tony Dreyfuss, Co-owner of Metropolis Coffee; Joshua Kaiser, CEO & Tea Buyer of Rishi Tea; Farmer Lee Jones, The Chef's Garden; Dame Veronica Hastings of H2 Vino, our sommelier for the evening as



Dames Nancy Cassidy, Toria Emas, and Veronica Hastings



Veronica Hastings, Sharon Olson, and Tami Mizrahi

well as Dame program chair and Dame Keli Fayard, of Vanille Patisserie who was responsible for the meal's sweet and beautiful finale.

Guests seated themselves in one of three handsome rooms and the festivities began - one sensational dish after the other arrived all perfectly matched with incredible wines - interspersed with chatter, information and laughter from each of the players roaming from room to room under the supervision of Ring Master Trotter, helping to demystify the labels on tea, coffee and wine while philosophizing on their feelings about food and life in general. Beautiful food, wine and quotes were too numerous to count but everyone delighted in Farmer Lee Jones statement, "Complacency is the beginning of the end!" There was certainly no complacency evident anywhere during this amazing evening.



left to right Farmer Lee Jones of the Chef's Garden, Tony Dreyfuss of Metropolis Coffee, Veronica Hastings, Keli Fayard, Joshua Kaiser of Rishi Tea, Charlie Trotter

For more photos from the evening and a recipe for the Mizrahi Cocktail, visit our website <http://lesdameschicago.org>

Headliners

Shelley Young reports that in 2010 The Chopping Block was named one of the "Top 50 Retailers by Gourmet Retailer" and voted "Best Cooking Store by Time Out."

Fox and Obel and **Pamela Fitzpatrick** and her team were named among the "Top Best Bread Bakeries in America" by *Bon Appetite*.

On January 15th, **Elaine Gonzalez** was presented with an award in San Francisco at the Fine Chocolate Industry Association's winter meeting. It's an achievement award for her many contributions to the fine chocolate industry in the US.

Mary Abbott Hess will be presenting an interactive workshop, "Nutrition in Action", to Foodservice Educators Network International on Feb.20th in Chicago and will speak on the Xperience stage of the CaterSource Convention in Las Vegas on March 1st.

"Cooking with Maple Syrup" was presented by **Ina Pinkney** on a Channel 7 TV show.

Sue Gin, Flying Food Group (FFG) Founder and CEO, was honored in 2010 for "providing world class airline cuisine" by Greater Jamaica (NY) Development Corp., as it saluted FFG's cutting-edge, \$30 million airline catering facility at JFK Airport. Sue Gin also received an honorary doctorate last May from Aurora

Headliners continued

University, which cited her business leadership and community service. *Crain's Chicago Business* designated FFG the third-largest minority-owned firm and fourth-largest woman-owned firm in the Chicago area. Sue Gin also named to *Crain's "Who's Who in Chicago Business"* for 2010.

Carrie Nahabedian represented the Chicago Bears at the "Taste of the NFL" at the Super Bowl in Dallas Texas. Carrie and NAHA also cooked at the Naples Winter Wine Festival in Naples, Florida. NAHA received a coveted Michelin Star in the new Chicago Edition of the 2011 Michelin Guide, awarded on the 10-year anniversary of NAHA on November 17. And did you know that Carrie Nahabedian was named a "Cheeky Chicago Girl" for 2011.

From the Editors



We urge all members to send articles and submissions to Nancy Brussat. Submit *Headliner* information at our website. Click the Members tab on the Menu Bar.

Deadline for the Summer issue is May 15, 2011.

Editorial Board: *Joan Reardon and Nancy Brussat*

Contributing Editors: *Nancy Brussat, Veronica Hastings, Carrie Nahabedian, and Jill Van Cleave*

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Panache is published by the Chicago chapter of Les Dames d'Escoffier for the benefit of its members.

For more event photos and information, visit our website:

<http://lesdameschicago.org>

2011 Calendar of Events

March 2011

Monday, March 14, 2011

New Directions for Healthful Cooking – panel discussion & dinner

May 2011

Monday, May 23, 2011

Dames Who Drink, NRA

Tuesday, May 31, 2011, 5:00-6:30pm.

Les Dames Austin will be hosting a Texas-Style Happy Hour for visiting Dames members during the IACP Conference in Austin. Please RSVP to LDE Austin President, Gina Burchenal at gina@ginaskitchen.com

June 2011

Monday, June 20, 2011

Annual dinner at Boka restaurant

July 2011

Friday, July 15, 2011

Green Tables event at McCormick Boys & Girls Club

Tuesday, July 26, 2011

An enchanted Evening in Dame Deann Bayless' Garden

For current information on chapter events, visit our website <http://lesdameschicago.org>



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