



PANACHE

Newsletter of Les Dames d'Escoffier Chicago

Culinary Garage and Bake Sale at NAHA



CULINARY GARAGE SALE and BAKE SALE

Saturday, November 12, 2011
8:00am-2:00pm
500 N. Clark Street @ NAHA Restaurant

Green City Market

Chefs from across Chicago and America will be donating their culinary kitchen treasures. To benefit the efforts of Chicago's Greencity market and Les Dames D'Escoffier

We will be having a wine bottle pull, Gift Certificate Grab and much more...

All of Chicago's best party chefs will be creating an Old Fashioned Bake Sale of their favorite baked goods.

CASH AND CARRY!

CHEF KNIVES, KITCHEN TOOLS AND IMPLEMENTS, SMALL WARE, COOKWARE, SAUTE PANS, CUTTING BOARDS, EQUIPMENT, CHEF COATS, APRONS, GONDOORS, MENUS, ARTWORK, ASSORTED PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS, CHINA, GLASSWARE AND SILVER!



left to right: Portia Belloc Lowndes, Judith Schad, Dana Benigno, Meme Hopmayer

What can we say??? It's been the trend of the century—signs on every suburban street corner announcing a “garage sale.” And everyone from Algonquin to Winnetka can tell you about the amazing heirloom to the terrific tricycle they picked up for “a song” along the Saturday pathway through the suburbs.

Never one to miss a beat, Carrie Nahabedian offered her restaurant NAHA as a gathering and selling scene on November 12th for the first Les Dames d'Escoffier and Green City Market “garage sale.”

At 11:30 pm the night before volunteers began sorting and pricing merchandise donated by dames and chefs and returned the next morning at 7:00 am to put cellophane on the desserts for the bake sale. The dessert display on the NAHA bar was spectacular. At 7:15 a.m. there was a handful of people pressing their noses to the window. By 8 a.m. there was a line of anxious buyers from the front door down to Grand Avenue and around the block.

Key people were, of course, Carrie Nahabedian who stood upfront talking to all the customers buying cookbooks, Tara Lane in charge of the bake sale, Linda Avery in charge of logistics and volunteers and Dana Benigno, Green City Market Manager. All the chairmen wish to thank the many volunteers who helped to make this event a success.

The sale cleared \$13,217. Proceeds will be divided between Les Dames and Green City Market.



President's Message



Dear Chicago Dames,

As the New Year begins, our plans to celebrate our chapter's 30th anniversary in 2012 are well underway. I am delighted and honored to be a member of an organization with so much energy and enthusiasm to take part in the festivities.

Having recently returned from the Les Dames d'Escoffier International Conference in Atlanta where we celebrated the 25th anniversary of our international organization, I was once again inspired by the collective energy and idea sharing at this conference. Every one of our delegates to the conference selected a topic of interest relevant to our chapter and prepared a report to share with the board and with our members.

Although we were all encouraged to tweet about the conference and there was a lot of digital chatter, the personal connections are what really stuck me. There was much conversation about the hope for the next generation learning to cook like mama used to cook with great ingredients. In this moment of taste, flavor, and ingredient driven cooking, there is a new culinary consciousness emerging, and of course many of the leaders in this movement were there to share their stories.

Cooking, canning, and charcuterie are all becoming more meaningful for a younger digitally connected generation striving for a more simple personal connection that food provides. On some college campuses the kegger has given way to the clandestine pig roast as the indulgence of choice.

Not long ago food security conversations related to food safety. Today the conversation is more about food democracy and the universal right to nutritious food, eliminating food deserts and who is not at the table. These discussions gave us something to consider when thinking about how our chapter can make a larger difference in our community.

We were honored to present our Global Adventures program at the panel discussion that included noteworthy chapter programs that supported the Global Culinary Initiative. Other chapters at this well attended break out session enthusiastically received our program. Photographs from our nutrition literacy program at the Boys & Girls Club were included in a presentation about chapters that have created important community programs around the Green Tables Initiative.

The Atlanta dames did a remarkable job of inspiring us and entertaining us with true southern hospitality and charm. The dames of St. Louis prepared a heartfelt song and dance show to invite us all to St. Louis, October 11-14, 2012. They have some remarkable plans to give us a real insiders' look at St. Louis. Since it is such a short distance away, I hope many of you will be able to come next year.

For now, let the 30th celebration for our chapter begin. My best wishes for a joyous holiday season and a happy, healthy and prosperous new year.

Warm regards,

Sharon Olson

Executive Board 2011 - 2012

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Holidays

Holidays mean different things to different people, but universally, the various traditions and gatherings of relatives and friends seem to be a part of Kwanza, Hanukah, Christmas and New Years Day. In this, our 2011 Winter issue of Panache, we look at both the memories and ways some of our members celebrate the holidays, and we take a second look at entertaining and past events that might not have been accessible on the website.

Jingle Bells

By Joan Reardon

It was a traditional outing, first begun with my nephew when he was about eight years old and after a few years continued with his sister, my niece Susan. The day started with a train trip into the city from Park Ridge, where my sister's family lived, and then a cab ride to Marshall Fields, where I had a luncheon reservation in the Walnut Room as near as possible to the two-storied Christmas tree that has always dominated the comfortable wood-paneled dining room.



First we shopped for a special suit or dress that would ultimately be found under the family Christmas tree, and then we made our way via escalators to lunch. My niece, especially, loved the large all-embracing chairs of the Walnut Room and the chance to order from the menu whatever suited her fancy and to watch other guests ordering their particular edible preferences. On one of the first of these special pre-Christmas lunches, she ordered chicken a la king. When it was served, she tucked into it with gusto.

And then it happened, a strolling trio of holiday-dressed musicians entered the room with violins poised to play festive favorites. When they passed our table, they riffed into "Jingle Bells." My niece leaned back into her chair with a beatific smile on her face, breathed a contented sigh, and simply said, "They're

playing my song." For her, Christmas was all about, Jingle Bells, simple pleasures, and, I hope that, among other things, it is for you, too.

Family Traditions

By Suzanne Florek



My family lives out of town and my husband's live here. We flip flop holidays between his cousins, aunts, my sister, and parents. Who ever has the youngest children gets to host Christmas Eve and dinner so Santa stays real. All other children are sworn to the BELIEVE game.

Traditions prevail in many ways. I make old Spiaggia recipes for Biscotti Dipped in Chocolate and Cornmeal Cookies. My mom always serves Beef Tenderloin and Gravlax. There is a Meringue Cake layered with whipped cream, from my grandmother, for which I searched for the right pans at garage sales for years and finally found. We make Gingerbread Men every year. When it is Tony's family's year for Christmas we gather all 50 of us for a potluck dinner. The meal includes Polish sausage, great Grandma's Kolache, and Uncle Joe's homemade bread. So for me, tradition means managing the chaos and raising my

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kids to be OK with a different set of expectations every holiday.

But there is one constant—Blueberry Jam* and we eat it every Christmas!

Three boys, two nieces two nephews, and my sister who lives in Cleveland get together in the summer. With lots of little fingers to keep busy, the tradition of blueberry picking came to be. All seven of the kids participate; washing, picking the stems, measuring the sugar, pectin, juicing lemons, smashing the blueberries, and eating the muffins we make in tandem. There is a small table in the kitchen the perfect height to mix and smash until the pot is full and ready to cook. We count the jars of finished jam in the morning and evenly distribute them.

4 Five months later, the traditional phone call is made after Thanksgiving. How many jars of jam does each of us have left? How many jars can we each bring for Christmas morning? My sister makes a pear coffee cake and I make cinnamon rolls. The jam is spooned out and spread on special bread, and plans are made for the picking date next year.

I am secure that my sons will cherish the memory and create their own new tradition with their family and know that food traditions keep and bind a family together. And I've spent the past year creating a site named Salty Fig** a place to collect, organize and share your recipes. I invite you to become a partner on the site if you have recipes to share.

*<http://www.saltyfig.com/main/book.html?ID=42&code=7ffm4tvf>

**<http://www.saltyfig.com/>

Fish and Cheese Night

By Candace Warner

I love holiday traditions. As with most couples, my husband and I blended favorites from each side of the family and created some of our own. I most look forward to Fish and Cheese night originally planned as a night off from rich holiday food and stacks of dirty dishes. Depending on when my brother and his family come to town, this new family celebration takes place sometime between Christmas and New Year's.



We wanted to keep the evening simple and to focus on one of my favorite foods, cheese – especially the kind from Sofia Solomon's Tekla. Each Christmas I get an incredible assortment of cheeses like pungent Robiola, herb coated Brin d'Amour, oozy Saint Marcellin, sharp 5 year aged Gouda. It is the "pièce de résistance" to our meal.

In order to have plenty of room to savor this glorious finish, we decided to begin with something light and easy – foods that would require a minimum of preparation. Since my husband and I both love fish we prepare some classic fish appetizers all to be served room temperature. Sometimes we vary the menu but normally our selections include sliced green apples with a smoked trout spread, shrimp and crab legs with a spicy cocktail sauce, smoked salmon on dark pumpernickel with mustard dill sauce and mini crab cakes. Of course, this is all accompanied with a good Champagne or Sauvignon Blanc, my favorite white.

Then we bring out the big guns – a splendid cheese platter accompanied by crusty French bread, grapes, pears, nuts, fig-almond cake, quince paste, plum apple relish and all the many chutneys that partner so perfectly with cheese. Each year we select another big red wine to taste. Last year it was incredible Gaja Barbaresco from our cellar. This year I'm eyeing a 2007 Antinori Tignanello.



It is one of the few times I pull out my paper French cheese leaves, and all the beautiful plates I seldom use to savor and present the cheese, fruit and nut selection.

This tradition was originally created to enjoy after the kids are tucked into bed. It is not exactly a kid friendly meal. However, I see the day coming when my children's palates will mature and they will want to be a part of the ceremony. My son already loves fish, and my daughter adores what she refers to as the "stinky" Gouda.

Dana Benigno Comfortable in the Kitchen

By Nancy Brussat

Dana Benigno grew up a country girl surrounded by cornfields and rich farmland in rural Vandalia, Illinois. The family lived behind her father's veterinarian clinic where corralling horses and castrating pigs was a part of everyday life. So was picking fresh fruits and vegetables from the family's large garden. Dana tasted a real tomato right off the vine at a very young age. She would often feel frustrated trying to duplicate that taste once she moved to the city and could only find the watery, woody, hothouse variety.

Always comfortable in the kitchen, Dana's repertoire included homemade jams, apple butter and canned vegetables.

She also loved to bake – pleasing college roommates with her teacher mom's peanut butter criss-cross cookies and Dana's favorite – chocolate chip. Somehow she managed to fit baking into the very demanding schedule of a college student.

Dana received her degree from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale with a major in journalism and a minor in marketing. Hoping to become an advertising executive like Darren Stevens of "Bewitched," she was disappointed to learn that St. Louis entry-level advertising positions were notorious for their low salaries. Instead she accepted a job as junior recruiter for a large national physician-recruiting firm.

Dana continued on this career path after marrying and moving to Chicago. Immediately, the country girl began to enjoy city life - especially dining out at some of Chicago's best restaurants. Still fresh in her memory are the delicious lamb rib chops at Gordon. Inspired by new tastes and beautiful plate presentations, she decided to take a year off to hone her cooking skills and change the direction of her career. She watched the newly inaugurated Food Network, took cooking classes wherever they were offered and eventually enrolled in CHIC receiving her culinary certificate in 1999.

One of her early heroes was Emeril Lagasse whose autographed photo still occupies a prominent place in her kitchen. Signed, "Dana, keep on cooking, it serves as a source of inspiration. Another early influence was cookbook author and teacher Joanne Weir. Dana counts Weir's five-day total immersion class in San Francisco as a significant step in her culinary learning curve. "I so admire the exactness and clarity of Weir's recipes," says Dana.



In 2000, she launched Chicago Cooks. Com, a culinary website, created as an online resource for all things food and wine. It has altered over the years and now includes a section where "foodies" can post their own happenings. She also began teaching cooking classes at Sur la Table and William Sonoma.

The next step in Dana's culinary journey was her first visit to Green City Market. "I was so excited to finally find the tomato of my childhood!" Dana exclaims. It wasn't long before founder Abby Mandel recognized Dana's talents. Abby invited her to be a member of the market task force and asked her to conduct the first on-line GCM chef auction fundraiser. Once the board was formed, Dana became an early board member. Ten years later, this past June she was appointed Green City Market Executive Director.

Dana became a member of Les Dames in 2006. She served on the board for two years as website director. She was one of the key players in the November culinary garage and bake sale, a fundraiser for both GCM and Les Dames. Tucked in-between these years Dana and business partner Tara Lane launched Sweet Girl Chocolate Mousse and Chocolate Soufflé, delicious dessert mixes available in upscale shops, markets and on amazon.com.

There is a certain synchronicity to Dana's life of late. She became GCM director at the same time her house hunting came to a happy conclusion. Finally she found a house with a garden in the middle of the city she has grown to love. Country Girl and City Girl have merged. And I, for one, look forward to tasting her first homegrown tomato.

Meet the New Members Party

On October 18th, Meme Hopmayer graciously hosted a “Get Acquainted with the Chicago Chapter’s New Members of the Past Two Years Party.” It was, as all of Meme’s parties are, a great success. Over the years, LDE Chicago has tried to integrate new members in many different ways, but the ambience of the hostess’s home, a generous supply of wine, and some delicious appetizers definitely works. And this effort is so important. Because it integrates older members with new members, and, of utmost importance, it leads to sharing experiences that may have been overlooked in the review process and in the necessarily complex process of acceptance.

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Let the Search Begin

It’s not too early to start thinking about new members for 2012. Our membership chair Meme Hopmayer has sent out criteria and requirements for nominating potential members. Remember that prospective members require two member sponsors and must attend at least two chapter events prior to submitting a nomination. For more information and if you have questions, contact Meme at memehop@gmail.com.



Ten Tips for Holiday Entertaining

By Jennifer Anderson

Are you thinking about planning a holiday party this year? Do you feel stuck in a rut and want to have a party that is different from all the other years. Look no further, because I have some great ideas for you.



- * Pick a theme. It could be a color, a shape or something more traditional. Consider snowflakes, evergreens, gingerbread houses or colors like royal purple and gold, shades of icy blues or even combining silver, gold and copper. The theme allows you to focus on one central idea and then you can plan for the décor, the food, beverage and even music.
- * Instead of purchasing new china or specialty glassware, consider renting china, flatware, glassware and even furniture.
- * Add tons of candles to the event. The flickering light is warm and inviting and adds festivity to any room. If you have small children or pets, consider battery-operated candles that can work as well as regular wax candles. You might also add some wonderful scents to your home such as a potpourri with fresh and exotic spices.
- * While your bar can be a full bar carrying all liquors, or just wine and beer, a specialty cocktail is a must. I especially like: a Caramel Apple Cider Martini, a Pumpkin Pie Martini, Hot and Spicy Cocoa with a hint of Kahului, Hot Buttered Rum and Pomegranate juice and Prosecco.
- * Use edible place cards, traditional sugar cookies or even gingerbread in all kinds of shapes to match your theme. Snowflakes, Gingerbread Men, Presents, and Christmas Trees are just a few.
- * Self Service Bars are at the top of my list. I always make the first drink and then tell guests that they are welcome to make their own cocktails.
- * Keep food simple. Design with the fresh produce of the season like beets and do a wonderful Warm Beet Soup with a Roquefort cream and caviar to top or consider Brussels Sprout Salad with dried fruit and mustard vinaigrette or Short Rib Pot Pie. All these can be made in advance and served with ease.
- * Most of all stay relaxed. The season is short and take time to enjoy it. Wrap your friends and family around you and celebrate the warmth of the season.

Joan Reardon: A Dame of Distinction

By Suzanne Florek

When Nancy Brussat requested the presence of the past presidents of the Chicago Les Dames d'Escoffier to discuss nominations for the Dame of Distinction Award, it was a unanimous discussion; Joan Reardon! It was a special moment at Shaw's Crab House (we only celebrate Joan with oysters) when we regrouped and told her she had been nominated for the award.

But the big event comes in May at our Annual Dinner where we will present Joan with this prestigious award and celebrate her many contributions to the culinary world and Les Dames Chicago.



left to right: Barbara Glunz, Toria, Emas, Nancy Brussat, Sharon Olson, Joan Reardon, Rita Gutekanst, Susan Florek

Talking Points

Nancy Brussat has joined the blogosphere with her stunning blog giving her many friends and viewers stories and scenes from her regional travels in Italy. The first one features the Valle d'Aosta and the serendipitous coffee drink she was introduced to there. Visit Nancy's blog at <http://nancybrussat.wordpress.com>

Carol Mighton Haddix demonstrated a BLT Dip recipe for WGN-TV's Midday Show Oct. 18. The recipe is from Good Eating's Best of the Best cookbook, which she edited before retiring from the Chicago Tribune last spring.

Nancy Siler and **Gretchen Homan** are currently planning the 10th season of the Telly Award winning Public Television Show "Bake Decorate Celebrate!" It airs in the US and 45 other countries. For show listings, projects and recipes, go to www.bakedecoratecelebrate.com

Ina Pinkney reports being a media coach for Sam Adams Brewing the American Dream. She also appeared with Gale Gand at the Professional Women's Club of Chicago luncheon, and was on a panel for Sustainability for Welcome Books. Ina chatted on Channel 7 with Linda Yu about her 20th anniversary in business, and spoke to Rotary groups about global polio eradication.

To read more and enjoy many photos from our chapter events including *Culinary Adventures on Devon, Green Tables at McCormick Boys and Girls Club and Scotch Dinner Pairing*, visit our Facebook page or go to our website.

For detailed information and registration for all events, visit our website:

<http://lesdameschicago.org>

From the Editors



We urge all members to send articles and submissions to Nancy Brussat. Deadline for the spring issue is March 15, 2012.

Editorial Board: *Joan Reardon and Nancy Brussat*

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**A special Thank You to photographer Rob Warner for the article illustrations.*

For more event photos and information, visit our website:

<http://lesdameschicago.org>

We are now on Facebook! To "like" us simply go to our website.

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2011 - 2012 Calendar of Events

December 2011

Saturday, December 3, 2011

Dames Who Drink: Holiday Brunch

11:30 a.m. at David Burke's Primehouse in The James Chicago Hotel, 616 N. Rush Street. Join chapter members for a holiday brunch before hitting the Magnificent Mile to shop 'til you drop. Dutch treat.

Please RSVP to Karen Levin : kale23@comcast.net

January 2012

Sunday, January 22, 2012

Post Holiday Potluck Dinner. These details are still to be determined. A special email will go out to the membership soon.

March 2012

Drink, Dish, Dash: Networking Les Dames Style at Ina's. (Enjoy a glass of wine and a few nibbles as you meet, chat and reconnect with Les Dames. Final details to be determined. This is a great event to invite prospective members!

<http://lesdameschicago.org>



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