



Fall 2016



# PANACHE

Quarterly Newsletter, Les Dames D'Escoffier Chicago

In This Issue: A Dame of Distinction Dames Who Blog Summer Recap and Recipes

## Nancy Brusset: Dame of Distinction

At June's annual dinner, Nancy Brusset received the chapter's 2016 Dame of Distinction award. Barbara Glunz recapped why Nancy is so deserving of the honor:

By Barbara Glunz 🍷

We take great pleasure and pride in honoring Nancy Brusset as our 2016 Dame of Distinction. She is not only a brilliant business woman, accomplished author, a true cosmopolitan woman of the world, a devoted mother and grandmother, but, also, since her induction as a charter member in 1982, Nancy has made endless contributions to our Chicago chapter and to the International Les Dames d'Escoffier organization.

She is the only member of our local chapter to have graciously and enthusiastically accepted two terms as president. From 1991 to 1993, she guided the early period of the chapter, assuring that the mission of LDEI was followed, while recognizing the unique spirit of the diverse Chicago membership. Her leadership and service were recognized with her 1995 election to president of International Les Dames d'Escoffier. Her experience in the international group led to the expanded mission of the Chicago chapter and its reach

into the Chicago metropolitan community, including the Green City Market. Uniting a group of career-oriented women, all pressured with the demands of work, family and a vast and changing culinary world called for a leader whose 25 years of chapter experience would confirm the continuity with our purpose while balancing the increasing size and diversity of our membership. In 2008, Nancy graciously accepted the challenge to lead our chapter for the second time. Words alone cannot express our recognition and gratitude to Nancy for the endless hours and many years that she has served, and continues to promote, the goals of Les Dames d'Escoffier.

In addition to her Les Dames work, Nancy has achieved professional success in business and enormous respect in the restaurant community. Being the founder and moving force behind Convito Café & Market did not happen easily.

In the late '70s, during a three-year residency in England, she made frequent trips to Italy to learn as much as possible about the food, the wine and the culture of this country she had come to love. Nancy gives credit to her extraordinary teachers, Milanese residents and future partners Paolo Volpara and his mother Wanda Bottino for teaching her the regional wines, cuisine and character of virtually the entire country. With this intimate background of knowledge, Nancy moved back to America in 1980, and she established her own business, a shop which would be part grocery, part retail source of pasta and sauces, part education center, part wine center, and part deli. Now joined in a business partnership with her daughter Candace, her legacy continues.

Nancy has balanced being a loving and caring mother and grandmother with being a consummate professional. We are proud to honor her as not only a sincere friend but also as our latest Dame of Distinction.

| Dame of distinction Nancy Brusset with daughter Candace Warner



# Dames celebrate the summer outdoors with music and bocce ball

By Amelia Levin 🍷

Two events brought members of Les Dames Chicago together for summer play and, of course, eating. Dame Gina Voci and her husband, Ed, hosted a one-of-a-kind evening of bocce ball and delicious Italian food, courtesy of the hosts and Dames who attended the potluck. And on a beautiful, rain-free summer night, 12 Dames and four guests came together to picnic and enjoy the music of Judy Collins on the lawn at Ravinia Festival in Highland Park.

Bocce winners Ed Voci, Rita Gutekanst, Toria Emas and Sol Parenti (Susan Parenti's husband) each took home a bottle of Overture wine from Opus Winery in California. Runners-up Mary Kay and Jim Gill and Jill and Larry Haas each received a private label bottle of olive oil harvested from olive trees at Opus One.

Standouts from the meal included Veronica Hastings and Todd Hess' roast chicken with olives, garlic and pancetta paired with prosecco and gin, as well as Debra Crestoni's arugula and fennel salad topped with fresh mozzarella di buffala that had been flown in fresh that day from Naples.

President Mary Reidy McMahon's cherry crostata and pizzele were also snatched up quickly, as was Gina's homemade tagliatelle with Bolognese sauce. Other dishes included burrata with culatello and seasonal tomato (Sharon Olson), grilled seasonal vegetables (Rita), arugula salad with orzo (Toria), quinoa salad (Eleanor Hanson), roasted artichokes and marinated shrimp (Mary Kay), beef tenderloin (Susan),

and for dessert, frozen limoncello bars (Jill) and rich chocolate brownies and cookies (Kathy Ruff).

On August 18, the Ravinia group met at Dame Karen Levin's house, where they enjoyed Karen's famous lime-spiked margaritas and feasted on Maria Concannon's highly sought-after guacamole, chips and salsa.

It was just a short walk around the block to the festival, where the group enjoyed a great view of the pavilion and surrounding screens broadcasting Collins' perfectly performed ode to Broadway master Stephen Sondheim. The food spread covered three tables and included an artisan cheese and fruit plate, chilled gazpacho and deviled eggs, along with three delicious salads: white bean and tuna, quinoa and veggies and salad-stuffed spring rolls with a tasty vinaigrette for dipping. "Main" courses included roast beef toast, chicken skewers with a tangy yogurt sauce and mini turkey and zucchini burgers with sumac-yogurt sauce, Pita Inn hummus, homemade pickled onions and okra and whole wheat pita pockets.

The Dames ended the meal with some seasonal fruit-inspired treats: cinnamon-laced peaches and homemade shortcakes with whipped cream, a nice and light peach cake, and a spectacular triple berry ricotta tart from Mary Reidy McMahon. Even though Victoria Hastings could not attend the event, she graciously donated bottles of sauvignon blanc and prosecco for the rest of the group to enjoy.

See recipes on back page

## Executive Board 2016-2017:

President: Mary Reidy McMahon

President Elect: Veronica Hastings

Past President: Julie Chernoff

Treasurer: Jill Haas

Secretary: Elizabeth Donovan

## Board of Directors:

Kathy Ruff

Amelia Levin

Roisin Hennerty

Norma Maloney

Margaret Laport

Flora Caputo

Carol Mighton Haddix

| Summer Ravinia food spread



| Summer bocce, Mary Reidy McMahon



| Summer bocce group



| Summer ravinia, Maria Concannon (right), Julie Chernoff and husband (left)



| Summer bocce, Veronica Hastings



## Blogs create an online kaffeeklatsch for a trio of Dames

By Judy Hevrdejs 🍷

In the world's vast blogosphere, Chicago Dames are stirring up some of the most delicious cyber-chats, with a mix of recipes, cooking tips, visuals, history, an occasional life lesson and wit.

Their blogs also reflect each blogger's distinct personality and passions, drawing a community of devotees into conversations about ingredients, cooking conundrums, food memories and more.

So we emailed a trio of Dames and asked: What's the most enjoyable part of the online culinary kaffeeklatsch you have created?

"Hearing back from followers, getting to know them and getting thanked for a certain project that gave them the confidence or guidance to try something new," said Flora Caputo, who started blogging as Urban Domestic Diva ([www.urbandomesticdiva.com](http://www.urbandomesticdiva.com)) in 2008 after people began asking her for advice about recipes, cooking, gardening and crafting.

Suzanne Florek has been posting recipes since 2013 on the Salty Fig e-CookBook platform ([www.saltyfig.com](http://www.saltyfig.com)) for archiving recipes and designing custom e-cookbooks. Then she tells stories behind those recipes at her Salty Fig blog ([www.saltyfig.com/blog](http://www.saltyfig.com/blog)) called "Pass the Salt." Both generate follower response that Florek especially enjoys, such as receiving "positive comments that someone tried your food and loved it, or they created an e-CookBook with their recipes and we see the large number of people who actually opened the e-Cookbook."

For Donna Battle Pierce, creating a trio of blogs since 2008 has been all about "introducing readers to my passions and encouraging everyone to save family recipes and sharing my research with readers."

Her most recent blog, FamilyReunionCooks ([www.familyreunioncooks.com](http://www.familyreunioncooks.com)) joins BlackAmericaCooks and SkilletDiaries ([www.blackamericacooks.com/skillet\\_diaries.html](http://www.blackamericacooks.com/skillet_diaries.html)) to "add a strong, respectful journalist's voice to the conversation about Black cooking traditions."

So who's following their blogs?

For Battle Pierce, it's a mix. "Millennials tell me they are searching for recipes 'like mom used to make' to celebrate special occasions," she said. "Boomers are searching for old-school stories, tips and techniques as they pass down recipes to the next generation."

For Florek, it's "artisanal brands and good cooks who want to be inspired. I do not believe in a meal in 20 minutes or less, unless we make it for you (which will happen soon)!"

And thanks to Google analytics, Caputo has found her followers are an even mix of men and women, foodies and crafters. "The mix changes, depending on the social channels that support the blog," she said. "For instance, my YouTube channel is split between men and women. Pinterest is all women."

There are challenges, of course. Just ask Caputo about "fitting the work into an already crazy schedule and being disciplined ... vacations and back-to-school prep, something had to give. Then the guilt sets in. You have followers, and you feel like you are letting them down when you fall off getting content up."

### Dames' favorites blogs

It's been almost a decade since blogs first emerged as digital sorts of journals, with culinary blogs not unlike the hand-written versions passed from cook to cook, with tips and coaching about technique and ingredients. Here is a short list of Dames' favorites, for, as Donna Battle Pierce noted, "I'm sure I've forgotten a dozen or so other favorites."

#### Suzanne Florek

Chez Madelaine (<http://www.chezmad.com>): Dame Madelaine Bullwinkle is "a wealth of information. I always read and cook her recipes."

They Draw and Cook (<http://www.theydrawandcook.com>): "A fun way to show recipes."

Dear Martini's How to Videos (<https://www.youtube.com/user/DearMartiniKitchen/featured>): "They do an awesome job...A YouTube blog, if you will."

Mama's High Strung (<http://mamahighstrung.com>): "Great blog for family meals written right here in Chicago."

Brooklyn Supper (<http://brooklynsupper.com>): "Really fun to read."

Chocolate and Marrow (<http://chocolateandmarrow.com>): "I'm also inspired by (this blog)"

#### Donna Battle Pierce

Afroculinaria (<https://afroculinaria.com>)

Soul Food Scholar (<http://adrianemiller.com/soul-food-scholar-blog>)

Grandbabycakes (<http://www.grandbaby-cakes.com/blog>)

Food52 (<https://food52.com>)

#### Flora Caputo

Fragrant Vanilla Cake ([www.fragrantvanilla.com](http://www.fragrantvanilla.com)): "A very talented home cook who has moved to all raw and vegan recipes. Her flavor combinations are really inspiring, even though I am not vegan."

The Cookbook Queen (<http://www.thecookbookqueen.com>): "Adds much needed mom humor to her recipes."

Brown Eyed Baker ([www.browneyedbaker.com](http://www.browneyedbaker.com))



| Suzanne Florek



| Donna Battle Pierce



| Flora Caputo



# Ricotta cheese tart with seasonal berries

President Mary Reidy McMahon brought this tart to the 2016 Ravinia event.

**Prep time:** 25 minutes **Cook time:** 1 hour, 10 minutes

**Chilling time:** 1 ½ hours

**Makes:** 1 (8-inch) tart, 6 to 8 servings

## Tart dough:

- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 7 ounces unsalted butter (1 stick plus 2 tablespoons), softened
- 1/3 cup confectioners' sugar
- 1 large egg yolk
- 1 medium vanilla bean, split and scraped

## Filling and topping:

- 1 1/2 cups ricotta cheese
- 3/4 cup sugar, divided
- 2 large eggs, separated
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- Zest from 1 medium lemon
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- Assorted mixed berries



1. Mix flour and salt in a medium bowl; set aside. Place butter in the bowl of a stand mixer bowl fitted with a paddle. Beat on medium speed until light and fluffy. Add confectioners' sugar and vanilla bean; continue beating until well incorporated. Add egg yolk; continue mixing until smooth. Stop mixer; scrape down the sides of the bowl. Slowly add the flour and salt with mixer running slowly until dough just comes together. Gather up in a ball; wrap in plastic. Chill at least 30 minutes, or preferably overnight.
2. Roll out tart dough and place in pan and crimp edges. Freeze at least 1 hour. When ready to bake the tart, heat oven to 350 degrees. Remove dough from freezer; place a piece of parchment paper on tart dough; fill with dried beans. Bake until golden brown, about 25 minutes; cool.
3. Meanwhile, for the filling, place ricotta cheese in a strainer; let drain about 1 hour. Pass cheese through a strainer; place in non-reactive mixing bowl. Stir in 1/2 cup of the sugar, egg yolks, lemon zest, vanilla and salt. Whip egg whites and remaining 1/4 cup of the sugar to soft peaks. Fold into the cheese mixture. Pour prepared filling into tart crust, place on sheet pan. Bake until golden brown, 45-50 minutes. Cool. Garnish the top with your favorite summer berries.

## FYI:

Yummly, a recipe search website, won the recent 20th annual Webby People Voice Award in the food and drink category. The award recognizes sites that cover the culinary world, including food culture, restaurants, recipes, and products. Opentable.com, a reservation service, also won a Webby Award.

Meanwhile, check out our own website to read about our past activities! [lesdameschicago.org](http://lesdameschicago.org)

# Roast chicken thighs with pancetta and green olives

Veronica Hastings and Todd Hess adapted this recipe from Toni Oltranti's recipe which appeared in the January 2009 issue of Gourmet magazine. They have made the dish many times, tweaking it in different ways to include black or cured olives, or mushrooms, or substituting bacon for pancetta. While broiling at the end helps crisp the skin, Todd prefers to use his handy, mini butane torch to crisp the skin before popping the chicken in the oven. If you have one on hand, definitely give it a try!

**Prep time:** 25 minutes **Cook time:** 35 minutes

**Standing time:** 10 minutes

**Serves:** 4

- 8 bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs
- 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 1/2 tablespoons chopped thyme
- 1 tablespoon chopped rosemary
- 1 tablespoon fine sea salt
- 1/2 to 1 teaspoon hot red-pepper flakes
- 10 garlic cloves, peeled
- 2 slices (1/4-inch-thick) pancetta, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 cup dry white wine
- 24 green olives

1. Heat oven to 450 degrees. Toss chicken with oil, thyme, rosemary, sea salt, red-pepper flakes, and 1 teaspoon of the pepper flakes, rubbing mixture into chicken.
2. Arrange chicken, skin side up, in a large sheet or roasting pan. Scatter garlic and pancetta on top. Roast on middle rack until chicken begins to brown, about 20 minutes. Drizzle wine over chicken; roast 10-15 minutes more until chicken is almost cooked through.
3. Turn oven to broil. Move the chicken to the top rack. Broil until skin is crispy and temperature reads 160 degrees (temperature will rise 5 more degrees while resting), about 10 minutes, adding the olives in the last 5 minutes of cooking time. Let stand 10 minutes before serving.

## Panache Contributors

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