



Fall 2017



# PANACHE

Quarterly Newsletter, Les Dames D'Escoffier Chicago

In This Issue: Dames Who Read President's Letter Scholarship Winners Meet New Board Members

## Dames Who Read dine and discuss 'Stealing Buddha's Dinner'

By Toria Emas 🍷

Dames Who Read met in July at Saigon Sisters, the restaurant owned by Les Dames member Mary Nguyen Aregoni. It was a fitting venue for dinner because Mary and her family experienced a similar immigration story to that of Bich Minh Nguyen, author of "Stealing Buddha's Dinner."

Mary's poignant tale included her escape from Vietnam via Laos, including a year in a refugee camp in Thailand, before ultimately reuniting with her mother when she saw her across a field on the camp grounds. The family's sponsors were from the Catholic community in Covington, Ky., which explained the dinner's welcome bourbon drink, aptly named Sweet Home Kentucky. The menu consisted of shared appetizers and entrees with a delicious chicken pho in between courses. Paralleling the book, Mary's

family always had a pot of pho simmering on the burner. The menu enjoyed at the dinner included a surprise ingredient, avocado, which showcased how Mary's staff adapted recipes to reflect their own heritage and cuisine.

A menu highlight was the banh xeo which was a crispy crepe with turmeric, bacon, shrimp, bean sprouts and nuoc cham served in a lettuce leaf with basil. Members wondered if Twinkies and Pringles would be on the menu, since the book often referred to those "delicacies" as typical American delights that were coveted by new immigrants. Luckily, Mary chose not to pay homage to the book and instead concluded the meal with red bean ice cream and "baognet" donuts (bao + beignet = baognet).

The author of "Stealing Buddha's Dinner" grew up in Grand Rapids and her father was remarried to a Mexican-American woman. Both families had a similar structure, with the grandmother as the head of the household, during their exodus from Vietnam. The American culinary landscape is changed and enriched with each wave of new immigrants.

Judith Hines and Stacey Ballis deserve kudos for selecting the perfect summer book to showcase one of our chapter members who enriches the Chicago culinary scene with her personal touch and exquisite cuisine. Mary shared a recipe (turn to the back page) for one dish served at the event, bo luc lac, which means "shaken beef." It is Vietnamese, but with a French twist: the addition of butter.

| Red bean ice cream and 'baognets'



| Toria Emas, Jennifer Lewis, and Judith Dunbar Hines at Saigon Sisters



| Mary Aregoni and mother "Mama Suu"



## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear Chicago Dames,

It is August as I write this letter and it's probably my most favorite time of summer as the tomatoes, eggplants, peppers and many more crops come into fruition. I feel as if the lovely annual dinner at

Maria Concannon's Don Juan Restaurante was just a few short weeks ago — where has the summer gone? I must take this opportunity to thank Maria and her amazing team for the great evening. Brava!

Our board meetings officially start this month, but many of us have been busy working behind the scenes. The Scholarship Committee just finished their work and selected seven women to be awarded scholarships. This is such a rewarding committee to work on. If you have not done so in the past I ask that you consider it and contact me. The committee, co-chaired by Pat Cobe and Joan Driggs did a wonderful job and their report is in this issue of Panache. A very big thank you to the entire committee. Also a big thank you to Pat and Joan who have graciously offered to chair this committee for another year!

The Scholarship Committee's work culminates in a joyous reception, at the French Pastry School on September 12. We need mentors to pair with our seven recipients. During the interviews, a few finalists who were not awarded a scholarship expressed a desire for a mentorship situation. Helping to develop these women's careers is key to what we do. The committee hopes we can accommodate these women with mentors; please contact Phaedra Ruffalo or Ina Pinkney if you wish to help mentor a young woman in the culinary arts.

Other committees have been busy during this time as well. A mix of brand new, slightly new and longstanding members attended the initial meeting for our fundraiser. The energy and enthusiasm in the room was promising for our event next April. Shortly many of us will be communicating to the membership with ways to get involved and insure our future ability to fund the scholarship and community outreach programs. Many of you who could not attend the meeting reached out to me with enthusiasm as well and offers of help. I thank all of you. The co-chairs for the fundraiser are Susan Szymanski, Dana Benigno and Wei Fraiser; feel free to reach out to them as well.

The executive committee also met in the beginning of August to review last year's ambitious list of goals, of which all were accomplished, and to establish our priorities for this year based on those goals. It will be no surprise that the fundraiser is our number one goal. Further development and fine-tuning of our new website is another main goal this year. I look forward to all of the great work the board and our membership will achieve. Happy fall!

Veronica Hastings



Les Dames d'Escoffier International

## Les Dames Chicago awards seven scholarships

By Pat Cobe 🍷

In August, the Les Dames Chicago Scholarship Committee awarded scholarships totaling \$30,000 to seven outstanding women pursuing culinary arts and hospitality programs at five area schools. The committee reviewed 33 applications, inviting 12 women for interviews conducted by co-chairs Patricia Cobe and Joan Holleran Driggs, along with committee members Mary Aregoni, Lois Levine, Phaedra Ruffalo and Judy Hevrdejs-King. These are the seven women who were honored at a reception at the French Pastry School on September 12:

**Anjail Belton** enrolled in the certificate program at the French Pastry School after 21 years of active service in the U.S. Navy. Upon graduation, she plans to pursue internship opportunities around the Chicago area, with the ultimate goal of opening a vintage-style cake shop.

**Keryn Cannon** worked is pursuing a certificate program in pastry arts at the French Pastry School and plans to open a shop where she will not only make and sell desserts, but provide a space for community outreach and culinary training for victims of domestic violence.

**Easter Coleman** has been running a successful catering business in Chicago for many years, sharing her expertise by training young people in her community as assistants. With the goal of expanding her skills, she is now attending Washburne Culinary & Hospitality Institute.

**Ambar Giorio Jackson** had been working at a bakery in North Carolina since she was 14. She applied to and was accepted at the French Pastry School. She plans to partner with her mother and open a concept that serves dessert and cocktails.

**Lisa Lee** was climbing the career ladder at Caterpillar, Inc., when she took the leap to follow her passion for cooking and enrolled in Kendall College's culinary program. Upon graduation she intends to open her own gourmet deli that also will serve as the front for her personal chef and catering business.

**Estelle Quenum**, originally from West Africa, drives a cab in Chicago to support herself and her young son. But she always had a dream to open her own pastry shop, so she applied to and was accepted at the French Pastry School. After graduation, she has an apprenticeship waiting for her at Bonjour Café.

**Sarah Van Tuyle** attends Joliet Junior College, but eventually wants to attend the French Pastry School to focus on baking. Sarah is very involved in her community, volunteering with the Lion's Club, Children's Hunger Fund, and the Morning Star Mission, serving dinner to the homeless.

| Photo by Anne Kaufman

Scholarship winners, from left, are: Lisa Lee, Estelle Quenum, Ambar Giorio Jackson, Keryn Cannon, Sarah Van Tuyle, Anjail Belton. Not shown: Easter Coleman





# A new season: Meet our new board members

**Executive Board 2017-2018:**  
 President: Veronica Hastings  
 President-Elect: Elizabeth Donovan  
 Treasurer: Jill Haas  
 Secretary: Phaedra Ruffalo  
 Past President: Mary McMahon  
**Board of Directors:**  
 Flora Caputo  
 Patty Erd  
 Judy Hevrdejs-King  
 Amelia Levin  
 Ina Pinkney  
 Carla Williams

Edited by Carol Mighton Haddix 🍂



### **Patty Erd**

Patty is a long-standing member of Les Dames and co-owner with her husband, Tom, of The Spice House in Evanston, Chicago and Milwaukee. She is a second generation spice merchant in a business founded by her parents, Ruth and Bill Penzey, Sr. in Milwaukee in 1957. Patty grew up working in the shop. The business has continued to grow and they have participated in many educational spice programs, including many programs for Les Dames.



### **Judy Hevrdejs-King**

Long before Judy was writing about food for newspapers and magazines, she was helping her mother and grandmother mix yeast dough for kuchen and dumplings. She built on those cooking and baking skills in 4-H, teaching young boys to cook. She then wrote about cooking for the Chicago Daily News and Chicago Tribune, giving her a chance to pursue her passion for translating food, cooking, baking and dining for consumers via print, video, blogs, TV and radio. Since leaving the Tribune in 2015, she writes and edits on a freelance basis.



### **Ina Pinkney**

Ina was the chef/owner of INA'S, an American food restaurant in the West Loop Market District that closed at the end of 2013. A member of Les Dames d'Escoffier since the 1980s, she was a board member and program chair. She led a coalition of Chicago Restaurateurs and Chefs to support Chicago's smoking ban and co-founded the Green Chicago Restaurant Coalition for restaurants in Chicago. In 2013, she published "INA'S KITCHEN: Memories and Recipes from the Breakfast Queen." In addition to writing a monthly column for the Chicago Tribune called "Breakfast with Ina," she was featured in a documentary about the closing of INA'S.



### **Phaedra Ruffalo**

Phaedra Ruffalo is Senior Director, Market Development, for the American Egg Board, focusing on promoting and educating foodservice and ingredient customers on the benefits of using eggs. Her food background began with a degree in Food Marketing and Distribution from Rochester Institute of Technology while moonlighting as a pastry chef. That helped her launch her career in food marketing in areas such as fresh-cut salads, rice, soups, desserts, and single ingredients. She has worked for companies such as Taylor Farms, Trader Joe's, Heinz, Mars, and Schwan's.



### **Carla Williams**

Carla has lived most of her life around food in a professional career spanning baking, savory cuisines, front- and back-of-house service, R & D, coffee, wine, culinary education, event planning, food photography, and, of course, eating! In 2016, with a desire to get back to Chicago, she took on a role with Hyatt Hotel Corporation. She always had a deep passion for food and sharing that passion with those who are considering/pursuing their culinary path.

Saigon Sisters owner Mary Aregoni shared this Vietnamese recipe:

## Bo luc lac

1 pound beef tenderloin or leg of lamb, trimmed, cut into 1-inch cubes

6 tablespoons canola oil, divided

7 teaspoons sugar, divided

4 teaspoons black pepper, divided

Kosher salt to taste

¼ cup each; rice wine vinegar, soy sauce

1 tablespoon fish sauce

Juice of 2 limes

3 green onions, cut into 1-inch lengths

2 cloves garlic, finely chopped

1 medium red onion, thinly sliced

1 tablespoon unsalted butter

1 bunch watercress, washed, drained

1. Toss beef with 2 tablespoons oil, 1 teaspoon sugar, and 2 teaspoons pepper. Season with (a pinch of) salt. Cover; set aside to marinate 1 hour, or overnight in the refrigerator.
2. For vinaigrette, combine rice wine vinegar, soy sauce and fish sauce in a bowl. Set aside. For lime dipping sauce, whisk together the remaining 6 teaspoons sugar, 2 teaspoons pepper and lime juice in a small bowl. Season with salt to taste. Set aside.
3. Drain beef; discard marinade. Pat beef dry. Heat 2 tablespoons oil in a large wok or skillet over medium high heat. Add half the beef cubes; cook until medium rare, 3 to 4 minutes, turning once. Remove first batch of meat to bowl. Add remaining 2 tablespoons oil; heat. Add remaining beef; cook as before. Remove meat; set aside.
4. Add half the red onion slices, green onions, and garlic to the wok, stirring constantly until wilted. Add half of the vinaigrette and the butter. Toss to combine. Arrange watercress on a serving platter. Spoon cooked beef over watercress. Serve with lime dipping sauce.

## Links

[lesdameschicago.org/panache-3/](http://lesdameschicago.org/panache-3/)  
for back copies of Panache in case you missed one!

### FROM THE EDITOR:

Get in touch with your inner writer! We are looking for volunteer writers and article ideas for Panache.

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