



# PANACHE

Quarterly Newsletter, Les Dames D'Escoffier Chicago



Summer 2017



In This Issue: [Members in Mexico](#) [President's Letter](#) [Meet Our New Members](#) [Celebrating Jill Van Cleave](#)

## Members in Mexico!

Diane Sokolofski 🌿

"Flavors of Mexico" in Guadalajara and the town of Tequila was a magical journey in the land of Mariachi music, regional Mexican cuisine, tequila tastings, colorful local culture and extraordinary culinary excursions. Blue agave fields stretched for miles over rugged terrain in this region that produces all of the world's tequila. The LDEI Mexico Chapter hosted this tour in March, attended by me and Toria and Bill Emas from Chicago and 70 other Dames and guests from across the U.S. and Mexico.

"Mas tequila por favor" was the trip motto. Highlights included a guided tour of Los Guachimontones, a prehispanic archaeological site near Teuchitlán, an hour west of Guadalajara. It's the major site of the Teuchitlan tradition, a complex society that existed from as early as 300 BC until 900 AD, and which created unique circular stepped pyramids surrounded by circular building complexes.

Next stop was a cooking class with Maru Toledo, a master chef who has dedicated a decade to researching the ancestral kitchens of Jalisco. She hosted the class in Ahualulco de Mercado village with *Las Mujeres del Maiz*

(Women of Corn), a group committed to culinary traditions, cooking regional dishes on controlled fires with homegrown ingredients. Everyone helped make different dishes in the humble outdoor kitchens for an unparalleled dining experience, including *pipian mole*, *huachales* (a regional pancake), posole, handmade corn tortillas and homemade flan.

That evening we visited trendy Tlaquepaque, a pedestrian-only zone of 300 shops, plus works by Sergio Bustamante, 19th century homes, and restaurants that double as galleries. Greeted by María Elena Limón, mayor of Tlaquepaque, and a local children's choir, we were escorted to Hildago Garden by regional dancers and entertained by orchestral and mariachi bands during an elegant six-course dinner, including *huitlacoche sopecito*, beef medallions with hibiscus chile morita reduction, and tamarind margaritas.

We toured Centro Educativo Jaltepec, a woman's culinary school where New York Dame Carol Brock presented a scholarship gift of 33,000 pesos from les Dames International. Then it was on to peaceful Lake Chapala,

Mexico's largest freshwater lake, for lunch at picturesque Monte Coxala Restaurant, overlooking the lake. Evening included a private 12-course tasting by chef Darren Walsh at the posh Lula Bistro. His plate presentations were phenomenal, with elements of molecular gastronomy that played with tastes and textures. The grand finale was a dessert of passionfruit toffee, lavender ganache, burnt chocolate, matcha "earth," chile pasilla jelly, and dark chocolate ice cream with pepper "glass."

The last day we took the Jose Cuervo Express Train to the town of Tequila, a charming town with an 18th-century church and the National Museum of Tequila. Greeted by Araceli Ramos, our Les Dames guide, we toured the distillery of Mundo Cuervo, learned about the process of making tequilas, and experienced a once-in-a-lifetime tasting of Reserva de la Familia, the world's first extra-anejo tequila, aged in French and American oak barrels. Our VIP farewell evening featured trick roping, a fire-eater, dancers, and live bands. A fine ending to a trip beyond our wildest dreams.

| Chef Darren Walsh at Lula Bistro served a dessert of passionfruit toffee, lavender ganache, burnt chocolate, and dark chocolate ice cream.

| Toasting with Margaritas at Lake Chapala were, from left, Jerry Farney, Diane Sokolofski, Alicia Pa'ramo Ortega, and Toria Emas.



## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear Chicago Dames,

As my tenure winds down, I wanted to recognize those who contributed to making this a fabulous and productive year for the Chicago chapter of Les Dames d' Escoffier:

--Many thanks to our past presidents for taking the time to share their experience and knowledge when I reached out for some sage advice.

-- Nancy Brussat, chair of bylaws and handbook review, and her committee members Toria Emas, Nancy Harris, Veronica Hastings, and Polly Peters.

-- Brenda McDowell for stepping up to head the search for our new board. Brenda is a long standing member, former board member, and a true professional. Her team consisted of Sharon Olson, Jean True, Susan Parenti, and Marilyn Wilkinson

-- Veronica Hastings did a stellar job leading the vetting our 11 new members. Beyond that, she has been a committed board member, and I look forward to her stepping into the role of our next president. Sharon Olson, Deborah Lesley Rivera, Carol Smoler, and Phaedra Ruffalo assisted Veronica.

-- Kudos to the Panache team: Carol Mighton Haddix, Flora Caputo, and Amelia Levin for contributing their time and talent. Also to the many members who contributed articles to our quarterly newsletter. Also to Amelia and Flora for continuing to populate and tweak our website and Google Documents files.

-- Julie Ratowitz, Program Chair, for putting together so many creative programs and her endless commitment and enthusiasm for our organization. Working with Julie were Norma Maloney and Jean True. Jean True also acted as New Member Liaison .

-- Karen Levin, founder and coordinator of Dames Who Drink

-- Judith Hines and Shannon Kinsella for continuing to manage Dames Who Read.

-- Phaedra Ruffalo, Mentorship Chair, who teamed dames with our current scholarship recipients.

-- Joan Driggs and Patricia Cobe, whose job is just beginning by interviewing potential scholarship recipients. Stay tuned for detail on the scholarship reception this fall.

-- Many thanks to our outgoing board members: Carol Mighton Haddix, Margaret Laport, Norma Maloney, Kathy Ruff, and past president Julie Singer Chernoff.

As I pass the torch to Veronica Hastings in the coming fundraising year, I ask each and every one of you to think about how you can contribute your time and talent to one of our many committees. For those new to our organization, it is a wonderful way to get to know your fellow dames.

Happy summer, all!



Les Dames d'Escoffier International

## 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

## Spring Events

### Dames Who Read:

An April dinner meeting of Dames Who Read appropriately was held in the Oyster Hall of Fame Room at Shaw's Crab House to discuss "The Arrangement" by Ashley Warlick, an historical novel about M.F.K. Fisher.

To start, of course, were oysters: East Coast and West Coast varieties, served with Champagne shallot sauce.



### Joan Nathan Lunch:

Dames and Standard Club members enjoyed a May luncheon of Jewish foods and a discussion with Joan Nathan, author of the new "King Solomon's Table" cookbook. Ina Pinkney, left, was the interviewer and Julie Ratowitz, center, introduced Nathan.



# Meet our new members for 2017!

By Veronica Hastings 🌿

The Membership Committee convened on April 12 to review and approve eleven candidates for membership. The committee included Veronica Hastings, chair, Sharon Olson, Debby Rivera, Phaedra Ruffalo, Carol Smoler, and Mary McMahon as ex-officio.

The new members represent a variety of careers, including pastry chef, literary agent, writer/blogger, radio/podcast host, culinary nutritionist, caterer, wine marketing/sales, food marketing strategist, and communications consultant. Our chapter is fortunate to have such a fabulous mix of women in leadership roles in the culinary world. The following new members were inducted during the June annual meeting:



## Stacey Ballis

Food and blog writer; author about to publish her 10th novel. Sponsored by Toria Emas and Diane Sokolofski

## Liz Barrett

Public relations and communications. Owner, What's in That Bottle, a public relations firm. Sponsored by Linda Eatherton and Susan Lamb Parenti



## Dobra Bielinski

Baker. Owner of Delightful Pastries bakeries. Sponsored by Julie Radowitz and Ina Pinkney

## Una Choi

Apparel manufacturing, specializing in chef uniforms. Choi Brands Inc. Sponsored by Jean True and Donna Hesik



## Amy Collins

Literary agent specializing in cookbooks, Squid Ink Literary agency. Sponsored by Chandra Ram and Pat Cobe

## Kimberly Keslin

Wine Business development. Sales Director, LD Vin. Sponsored by Debra Crestoni and Gina Voci



## Yvonne Maffei

Food writer, cookbook author, online retail, social media. My Halal Kitchen. Sponsored by Julie Chernoff and Patty Erd

## Caroline Margolis

Culinary nutrition communications and catering. Partner in Sweet Chickadees. Sponsored by Susan Lamb Parenti and Sara Reddington



## Margaret McSweeney

Culinary communicator. Host of Kitchen Chat Radio and podcast. Sponsored by Ina Pinkney and Jean True

## Lisa Miller

Marketing Director, Ornu Foods North America. Sponsored by Roisin Hennerty and Margaret Laport



## Susan Weller

Hospitality and brand development. SW Strategies. Sponsored by Pat Cobe and Joan Driggs



# Celebrating and toasting the life of Jill Van Cleeve

By Nancy Brussat 🍷

Jill Van Cleeve lived her life with a spirit of enthusiasm up until the very end. A connoisseur of fine food and drink, her idea of “civilized pleasure” was sharing a meal with good friends over a glass of excellent Champagne.

Jill’s early accomplishments included working as garde manger for chef Bernard Cretier at Maxim’s, charcuterie chef at Leonard Solomon’s Wines & Spirits, test kitchen chef at Lucille Lampman’s International Institute of Foods & Family Living, and partner of the JR Desserts shop. Jill eventually established her own company, Jill Van Cleeve, Ltd., a consulting company focusing on working with PR and advertising agencies to service their client’s needs. One company was Olson Communications. Sharon Olson describes Jill as “brilliant and one-of-a-kind with that matter-of-fact confidence she always had.” Jill not only developed recipes for other people, but also wrote many cookbooks including “Big Soft Chewy Cookies.”

Jill was married to Bill Rice, one of the pillars of The Chicago Tribune’s Good Eating section and former editor of Food & Wine Magazine. They were the “it” couple in Chicago’s culinary scene, always in demand at wine and food events across the city, not just because of Bill’s

Tribune connections, but because of their deep understanding of food and wine and their reputation for being expert judges in all matters of taste. Bill died in 2016.

Mary McMahon remembers Jill’s advice when Mary became a member of Les Dames. “Get involved,” she advised. Jill followed her own advice. Barbara Glunz recalls Jill’s stint as Program Chairman: “Jill’s vast contacts and years of generosity came back to our organization in reasonably priced, excellent programs.” Jen Lamplough remembers Jill’s programs as “perfection, especially the slightly decadent and great networking Saks event.” Nancy Harris’s favorite event — “maybe of all time” — was Jill’s outstanding Shedd Aquarium program on “Sustainable Seafood.” Jill was Abby Mandel’s market manager when Green City Market originated. She not only shopped there every Wednesday and Saturday, but also co-chaired one of the early Chef’s BBQ fundraisers with Karen Levin. Later, when shopping became too difficult due to illness, Karen took over. “Although Jill’s list was long and very particular, I was happy to be Jill’s personal GCM shopper, providing her with the excellent market products she so loved,” Karen said.

Sofia Solomon, Jill’s dear friend, says it best. “She was as dependable in her friendship as she was in business. Although she could appear reserved, if you were lucky enough to really get to know her, she was bright, funny and could even exhibit a “wild and crazy” side now and then. Above all she was a loving and loyal friend.” Jill died on March 29.

Jill loved Champagne. It is such a celebratory drink. All of you who valued Jill’s friendship, please take a moment, pour yourself a glass of Champagne, and raise it in celebration of Jill’s life — one lived with purpose and joy. She would love that!

| Jill Van Cleeve and Bill Rice on their 20th anniversary dinner at Printers Row restaurant.



## Visit

Our refreshed [lesdameschicago.org](http://lesdameschicago.org)!

FROM THE EDITOR:

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

## Panache Contributors

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