



In This Issue: Why LDEI matters President's letter Conference recap

Festive baked goods from members make perfect last-minute gifts

Judy Hevrdejs 🍪

You got caught up in all of the holiday excitement, didn't you? And now, at the last minute, you realize you need to find gifts for a few more people. No problem. Dames who bake have you covered.

At pastry shops throughout the Chicago area, they offer a mix of traditional and whimsical sweet creations -- perfect solutions for any last-minute gift emergencies. But here's a quick P.S. You probably should call ahead to place an order or check if the item you want is still available.

Dame Deborah Lesley-Rivera / Ambrosia Euro-American Patisserie

Luscious tortes and tarts at Ambrosia have been drawing sweet seekers to this Barrington shop for 26 years. It's a Viennese classic, though, with its hazelnut pastry, raspberry marmalade and latticed pastry top, that signals the start of the holidays. "The Austrian Linzer tart is a heartwarming, seasonal reminder that the winter holidays are upon us," said Lesley-Rivera. "Our customers enthusiastically recognize this that we make into both cookies and tart form."

It is a versatile choice for the season, whether it's a gift for a skier or skater or a holiday hostess. "The combination of butter, hazelnuts, cinnamon and raspberry seedless Swiss marmalade pairs beautifully with coffee, tea, wine or port," said Lesley-Rivera. "And it doesn't need refrigeration. This delicious classic pastry is best served room temp." A 9-inch

tart is \$38; a 7-inch is \$28. Linzer cookies (sandwiched with raspberry filling) are \$2.75 each.

Ambrosia Euro-American Patisserie (discoverambrosia.com). 710 West Northwest Highway, Barrington; 847-304-8278

Dobra Bielinski / Delightful Pastries

Traditional European pastries – croissants, scones, colorful French macarons – fill display cases at Delightful Pastries in Jefferson Park and in the Chicago French Market. During the holidays, sweets such as a *buche de Noel*, poppy-seed strudel, and whimsical winter-themed cookies join them, especially at the Lawrence Avenue shop.

Grinning snowmen, holiday-decorated trees, angels, gingerbread boys and girls, Santas, and mushrooms, their caps iced red, their stems touched with a green frosting "grass," are just a few of the characters. "The variety seems to grow organically," said Dame Bielinski who opened Delightful Pastries in Jefferson Park with her mother, Stasia Hawryszczuk, almost 20 years ago. "A lot of people give them as gifts. Or they arrive with their own platter or holiday cookie tins and ask to have them filled," she said, adding, "I tell them to sprinkle a bit of flour around the kitchen to let people think you made them." Bielinski also has gluten-free and vegan items that could serve holiday duty, from a vegan pecan-cranberry sourdough bread (\$6) to a gluten-free bread (\$10) that's made with sunflower seeds, almonds and oats among other ingredients and could work perfectly with holiday cheeses or spreads. But if it's a gift for a child – or a child at heart, since

Bielinski says 90-percent of the cookie buyers are adults – the snowman and his friends (\$2.50-\$3.99) are a smile-inspiring solution.

Delightful Pastries (delightfulpastries.com). Locations: 5927 W. Lawrence Ave.; 773-545-7215; and Chicago French Market, 131 N. Clinton St.; 312-234-9644.

Toni Marie Cox / Toni Patisserie & Cafe

Dame Cox has been shaping dried fruits, nuts and sweet yeast dough into hundreds of stollen loaves for decades, based on a recipe she learned during a course taught by the late, renowned pastry chef Albert Kumin, once White House pastry chef during the Carter administration.

"When we opened our Hinsdale location in 1994, we made sure to offer this treat during the holiday season," said Cox, who adds almond paste to the loaf studded with nuts, rum-soaked raisins and candied fruit.

"Almond paste incorporated into the dough gives it a rich texture and a lovely unique flavor," Cox added. "When the bread is still hot out of the oven, we brush it with melted butter and cover with cinnamon sugar."

Stollen is such a popular gift that, between the Patisserie's locations in Hinsdale and Chicago, more than 500 loaves are sold in December alone. A 1.5-pound loaf, which Cox's husband calls "shockingly delicious," is \$18.95.

Toni Patisserie & Cafe (tonipatisserie.com). Locations: 51 S. Washington St., Hinsdale; 630-789-2020. And 65 E. Washington St., Chicago; 312-726-2020.

Stollen from Toni Patisserie & Cafe



Snowman cookies from Delightful Pastries



Austrian Linzer tart from Ambrosia





PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear Chicago Dames,

In October of 2009, I attended my first LDEI conference in the delightful city of Philadelphia. I learned so much and met so many wonderful new friends. I also came to understand how the LDEI Board works, especially in relation to local chapters.

After my first conference, I was hooked -- and indeed those very words were said to me this year by a newer member of LDE Chicago who served as a conference delegate. Since becoming a member of LDE Chicago in 2008, I have attended seven international conferences. A conference is a way to reconnect with old friends, make new friends, catch up on industry trends, and expand one's perspective and respect for our wonderful organization and its talented and awe-inspiring members!

On this page, Julie Chernoff writes about her conference experience as president of the Chicago Chapter in 2014, which inspired her to become involved in the international board. She now is in her second year serving as a Chapter Board Liaison. The new international board includes another Chicago Dame, Sharon Olson, serving as secretary, her second time serving on the LDEI board.

At this year's conference, Julie Chernoff moderated the Leadership Forum where Chicago Dame Toria Emas was one of the panelists, and in one of the break-out sessions, yet another Chicago Dame, Ina Pinkney was a panelist. A total of 16 Chicago Dames attended the Newport Beach conference. Over the last few years, the Chicago chapter consistently has had a strong showing of Dames at conference, at least 8 to 12 attend each year.

Toward the end of the weekend, I was speaking with a new Dame from the Sacramento Chapter who was impressed by how many Dames from Chicago were in attendance and participating on the International board and in conference programs. I smiled brightly and said, "Yes, we have a fabulous chapter!" I truly hope the articles in this issue of Panache inspire even more of you to attend the conference next year. Know that I will certainly be there! In addition to meeting new Dames from other cities, the conference is an excellent way to get to know fellow Chicago Dames better (a late-night dance-party in the hotel bar will do that!).

By this time, you will have received information about Culinarium 2018, our fundraising gala slated for April 30. To paraphrase Hillary Clinton, "It takes a village." If you have not yet signed up for a committee, offered to secure a live auction item or silent auction item, please consider doing so. If you wish to help but are not sure how to, call me, or one of the committee heads. This year we will offer complimentary tickets to important influencers and media, and are looking for Dames to sponsor these tickets. This is a great way to "participate," if you cannot attend.

January 21 is our Annual Post-Holiday Celebration. You are encouraged to bring a spouse or a potential member! This year it will be at Dame Stacey Ballis' lovely home in Logan Square. The evening will start at 5 p.m., but we are switching it up a bit from the usual format, so stay tuned for further details.

I wish all of you and your families and friends a warm and peaceful holiday season, full of delicious food and wine and joy!

Fondly,

Veronica Hastings



Les Dames d'Escoffier International

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Why LDEI matters

By Julie Chernoff

I attended my first — and for a long time, only — LDEI Conference in the late '90s. Held in Atlanta, it was filled with interesting women, great ideas, and fabulous food and wine. But life with two kids and a traveling husband precluded a return. But four years ago, in my first year as Chicago Chapter president, and my kids away at college, I flew to Boston and attended my first conference in 15 years. Fellow Chicago Dames, my mind was expanded at that conference, a confluence of exceptional programming, fascinating and accomplished women, life-changing networking opportunities and, to be sure, delicious food and wine. Long-time Chicago attendees such as Karen Levin, Sharon Olson, Mary McMahon, and others were already in on that secret.

I went to the Brock Circle event to represent our chapter membership and was spellbound by the story told by Grande Dame Carol Brock, founder of LDEI. I started spreading the gospel, encouraging other Chicago Chapter members to attend the following year in Charleston with me, and getting the itch to learn more about the LDEI Board of Directors. As Chicago chapter president, I was exposed to our Chapter Board Liaison (CBL), and participated in the quarterly calls with other chapter presidents that proved inspiring and most helpful to my own stewardship of our Chapter. After attending the Charleston conference, and hearing the stories of the LDEI Green Table Initiative — most notably how the Charleston and St. Louis Dames had rallied to support their communities after devastating tragedies — I was so inspired that I did two things: I joined the Brock Circle to help raise funds to support the message and ensure the fiscal health of LDEI; and I threw my hat in the ring to be a CBL on the LDEI Board.

I've now been to four consecutive conferences (last year in Washington, D.C., and this past October in Newport Beach), and I'm in my second year as a CBL. I've gotten very involved in a number of facets of board business, including the restructuring of the CBL divisions and processes, the Grande Dame Award, and the Chapter Leadership Session. The work is fascinating and impactful, enriching the experience of this community of women in the dining, beverage and hospitality industries. If you haven't recently, be sure to check out the ldei.org website and read about the Legacy Awards, Green Tables and Global Culinary Initiative programs. Raise your hand. Get involved. You can start by volunteering for our Chicago fundraiser, Culinarium, this spring, or by nominating yourself to serve on next year's LDE Chicago Board of Directors. And come to the 2018 LDEI Conference in Seattle, "Grey Skies, Bright Ideas." I promise you'll be inspired.

A Look Back: The 2017 LDEI Conference

By Liz Barrett, 

with contributions from Jill Haas, Carla Williams and Veronica Hastings

We are happy to share some of the experiences of our Chicago delegates to the Les Dames d'Escoffier International Conference in Newport Beach, Calif, Oct. 26-29. We hope they inspire you to plan a trip to the next LDEI Conference, in Seattle October 2018!

Conference activities kicked off with a number of special excursions. Dames Liz Barrett and Patty Erd took a VIP tour of Disneyland and Liz shared her takeaways:

Behind the Scenes Food Tour of Disneyland

Our group of 20 entered Disneyland "the back way," through a fence from a parking lot, and we immediately were awed! Welcome to Frontier Land, and hello, Winnie the Pooh! We were hosted by Michele Gendreau, director of Food & Beverage Experience Integration at Disneyland, who first led us to Walt Disney's apartment in "New Orleans." The "magic buttons" in the rooms triggered all sorts of music, lighting and magical effects (including transformation of a mirror into Cinderella's "casserole" as Liz exclaimed. Castle, casserole ... hey, we always have food on our minds!).

A visit to Disneyland's Central Bakery followed, where we met Executive Pastry Chef Jean Marie Viallet. Fifteen million pieces of pastry a year are produced in the 12,000 square-foot facility, which is open 21 hours a day, 7 days a week, and staffed by 140 employees.

The number one seller? "Gray Stuff" from "Beauty & the Beast." It's a red-velvet cake with Oreo cookie mousse with glitter and sprinkles. It sells for \$6 at the Red Rose Tavern in Fantasyland. Managers thought they would sell 500 a day, but they quickly found out it would be 1,500 a day.

Then we were off to the Banquet Kitchen, where 12 chefs prepare everything from lunch for five to corporate events for 500, serving Disneyland and Disney's California Adventure. They also prepare food for the Festival of Holidays and the Food & Wine Festival.

We wrapped up with a beautiful buffet lunch at California Adventure (again, entered through a surreptitious secret fence!), which featured a sneak peek of some of their holiday offerings. We toasted our hosts with

Chandon California sparkling wine mixed with white cranberry juice (deedlicious). It was a magical day, and yes, Disneyland is the happiest place on earth!

On to Business!

Thursday afternoon featured a Leadership Forum, where Dame Julie Chernoff moderated a panel discussion with our own Toria Emas and Sandy Hu, both long-time Dames and past presidents of LDEI.

Sandy Hu shared her favorite agenda format for an effective meeting, "since people hate meetings, we need to do them better." She said to start and end them on time, and give the silent people in the room opportunity to speak.

Toria talked about making decisions, learning from mistakes, and nurturing members. Our philosophy should be to create leaders and empower people. She noted that careful recruitment of new members is key to developing future board members.

The conference officially commenced on Friday morning with keynote speaker Dame Sherry Yard, former pastry chef of Spago and now COO of iPic Hospitality Group, where she leads culinary innovations at entertainment complexes around the country. In her talk, entitled "Breaking the Glass Kitchen Ceiling," she emphasized the power that lies in using the word "no," and encouraged everyone to persevere and support fellow women in the industry.

Can I Stop Now?

This discussion about "next chapters" in one's career featured our own Dame Ina Pinkney, as well as two noted California Dames. It was inspirational to hear from three Dames at various points in the late stages of their careers.

Cathy Taylor, former Orange County Register Food Editor: When laid off in 2016, she made a Happiness List of things she liked in her job, and she crafted a new career, as an independent food writer. She used myemma.com to create e-newsletters. She started a blog. She made videos interviewing star chefs, and her "Cook's Quiz" in every newsletter (with prizes!) keeps her fan base growing.

continued on page 4

| Members of the Chicago chapter who attended the 2017 conference.



A Look Back: The 2017 LDEI Conference (continued)

Ina Pinkney had 21 jobs and “was fired from 19 of them!” She talked about how she strategically planned her restaurant: “I built the restaurant backward to the guest,” anticipating what people wanted: superior coffee, a conversation-friendly atmosphere and the best quality, most delicious food.

Ina noted her self-published cookbook, produced in 10 weeks, strategically came out just before she announced the closing of her legendary restaurant. She printed 7,000 copies, and has just 36 left. Ina also described how a documentary about her, “Breakfast at Ina’s,” produced by Mercedes Kane, helped position her as an expert and an influencer. Her overall lesson: Instead of retiring, you pivot. Today, Ina is a nationally recognized and in-demand speaker on breakfast trends, and has a monthly column on breakfast (what else!) in the Chicago Tribune.

Patty Londre owned her own food public relations firm for decades. She says she is a self-proclaimed quitter: “Quit something when it’s not in line with the person you are or want to be; when your conscience is compromised; when dread appears.” One of her adages: “Never mistake motion for action.” She also advocated strongly that women use the word “no” more, to control the number of obligations.

| Toria Emas presented ideas on making good decisions and nurturing chapter members.



| Halloween treats enlivened the conference menu.



Global Culinary Initiative

Dames Sandra Gutierrez, Theresa Lin and Thoa Nguyen spoke about using food to bridge cultures. They encouraged us to celebrate and support other cultures and immigrants, especially with food.

Sandra Gutierrez, cookbook author and writer, stressed the surprising affinities between foods of Latin and Southern regions. Her cookbooks highlight traditional Southern Foods with Latin twists, like Latin pimento cheese. She reminded us that there are 20-plus Latin American countries, each with different foods and techniques. The population exchange has influenced ingredients and cooking methods.

Thoa Nguyen is a chef and restaurant owner. She beat Bobby Flay with her Ahi Poke with Bibimbap recipe. She owns two restaurants in the Seattle area called Chinois Café and Sushi Chinois, serving Asian food that is approachable and fun. She was born in Saigon and immigrated to Denver, Colo., when she was young.

Final speaker Theresa Lin is a food stylist and caterer from Taiwan, best known for her food styling and catering for movies like “Eat, Drink, Man Woman” and “Life of Pi.” Theresa wanted to be a diplomat growing up, but now says cooking is her way of becoming an ambassador.

Such inspirational speakers helped make this conference rewarding for all of the delegates.

A full conference report is available on our website, lesdameschicago.org.

CULINARIUM 2018: Save the date!



Culinarium 2018 will take place on April 30, 2018

Cocktails at 5:30 p.m.

Venue West, 221 N. Paulina St.

Make a resolution to help with this extraordinary evening of world-class food, drink and fun from some of Chicago’s most talented women chefs, sommeliers, beer experts and mixologists. Proceeds from Culinarium fund Les Dames d’Escoffier Chicago’s community outreach programs, educational programs, and scholarships that inspire emerging leaders and enrich Chicago’s culinary scene.

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