

Nibbling, networking and sharing ideas at our Town Hall Meeting

By Carol Mighton Haddix

A gathering of 26 members and guests sipped wine, filled plates with deviled eggs, sausages, olives and cheese, and then sat down to share thoughts about Les Dames Chicago at the Oct. 26 Town Hall Meeting at the charming Glunz Tavern.

Hostess Barbara Glunz described some of the historic items in the tavern in the Wells Street building that has been in her family since 1888. Then president Julie Chernoff opened the discussion by asking members to introduce themselves and describe the most exciting thing to happen to them this year.

After hearing everyone's stories, projects and accomplishments, most agreed that it was a great way to get to know fellow Dames.

Program chair Portia Belloc Lowndes asked for discussion about past and future programs and how to keep members interested. Ideas included opening more meetings to the public, utilizing our connections to outside experts in food and wine (creating a resource list gathered from members) and including more 'navigating your business' topics.

Another suggestion was to create a theme with targeted goals for each year and follow it up with programs and "punched up" communications through social media.

Nancy Brussat heads the new Policy Committee and she described the goals of reviewing the Dames Chicago handbook and bylaws. The committee will make suggestions for change to the board in the months to come.

Membership criteria also were discussed. What does "full-time" food professional mean today, compared to when Les Dames began? Many agreed that the chapter should better pursue qualified candidates for membership in a wide variety of professions. An "innovation" committee was suggested. Also, should the chapter consider a "junior board?" Many agreed that was not necessary, but that programs and communications should encourage new members to get involved with the chapter events.



PANACHE

Quarterly Newsletter, Les Dames D'Escoffier Chicago

In This Issue: The Dorie Greenspan Visit. President's Letter
In Memoriam: Sue Lin Gin. Meet Your Board Town Hall Meeting.

Talking about French pastries, chez Dorie Greenspan

By Dana Benigno

Members of Les Dames Chicago gathered on November 9 to welcome acclaimed cookbook author Dorie Greenspan to Glunz Tavern in honor of the release of her new book, "Baking Chez Moi" (Houghton Mifflin, \$40). Dorie has written many award-winning cookbooks, quite an accomplishment for someone who confesses to burning down her parents' kitchen at age 13.

Dorie discovered Paris early in life and instantly fell in love with the food, pastries and culture of French living. For many years, Dorie has divided her time between Connecticut and Paris, cultivating this zest for French food. Her previous book "Around my French Table," won both a James Beard Award and an IACP award. The paté and gougères served at the reception were recipes from that book.

Looking very French in a tailored tunic, leggings and ballet flats, Dorie began her discussion by describing her inspiration for the new book. It came from her pondering the question, "I wonder what sort of desserts my French friends bake at home for everyday?" But when Dorie tasted a home-baked cake or simple dessert and asked for the recipe, her friends would say, "Oh this is so simple, you don't want this recipe," or they simply refused to give it to her, as if there were a secret French code: "Don't let people know you bake, we are a Pastry Shop Culture!" When Dorie decided to include a macaroon recipe in the book, they replied, "Macaroons should be left to the professionals. No one should need a recipe for a macaroon!"

Dorie, undeterred, continued pressing and did find many simple recipes. Her

account of the journey gathering those recipes was funny and engaging. The book's recipe introductions read like stories shared around her kitchen table. One anecdote accompanies a recipe for her friend Bernard's favorite birthday cake, called "Moka DuPont," named after Madame DuPont, the neighbor who gave the recipe to his mother. The cake is espresso-dipped butter cookies layered with moka flavored buttercream frosting and refrigerated. It turned out to be an American-inspired icebox cake that many of her friends prepare -- but do not discuss!

Following her talk, Dorie stayed to sign books and speak briefly to each member. As she signed my book, I asked her what caused that kitchen fire at age 13. She replied, "Frozen French fries, it was a grease fire!"

Learn

about this year's Les Dames Chicago scholarship recipients:



<http://lesdameschicago.org/2014/09/scholarship/>



Panache Contributors

Editor: Carol Mighton Haddix

Contributing Editors: Dana Benigno, Joan Reardona Caputo

Printing: Folio Press

Distribution: Eleanor Hanson

© 2014 Les Dames d'Escoffier Chicago





PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear Chicago Dames,

Fall meant travel for me this year, but perhaps none as educational — or as collegial — as my trip to the 2014 LDEI Conference:

The Best Begins in Boston. It was my first foray to the conference in many years, so I was especially grateful to be joined by fellow Chicago Dames Karen Levin, Brenda McDowell, Victoria Hastings, Toria Emas and Sharon Olson (all conference veterans) and our Chicago Chapter delegates Patty Erd, Mary Reidy McMahan, Judith Hines and Shannon Kinsella. They helped me navigate through the many plenary and breakout sessions, tours and panels during the weekend.

Of course, I'm always proud to be a member of this illustrious group, but it was downright inspirational to hear about the successes of other chapters; I found the leadership meeting, which combined Dames serving on Boards from every chapter, to be especially fascinating — and helpful. Hearing about the triumphs and failures of each chapter and sharing best practices was a real bonding experience. One of the real highlights of the weekend was the Legacy Awards Luncheon, where the six winners shared their personal experiences from their Dames-hosted externships. Our own Past President Toria Emas has been instrumental in these awards since their inception. I'd love to see the Chicago chapter host one of these talented young women in the future.

Congratulations to Past President Sharon Olson, who joins the LDEI board as Secretary under the leadership of Board President Lori Willis (St. Louis), who you may remember was a special guest at our Annual Dinner this past June. Lori's enthusiasm for Les Dames is infectious.

I look forward to attending the 2015 LDEI conference in Charleston, S.C., to be held October 29 – November 1, 2015. I hope you'll join me!

Fondly,



Les Dames d'Escoffier International

Executive Board 2014-2015

President: Julie Chernoff
Vice President: Donna Pierce
Treasurer: Polly Peters
Secretary: Anne Kauffman
Past President: Jennifer Lamplough

Board of Directors:

Portia Belloc Lowndes
Patricia Erd
Suzanne Florek
Catherine Koelling
Mary Reidy McMahan
Melissa Yen

In Memorium: Sue Lin Gin

By Carol Mighton Haddix



Sue Lin Gin was a real estate maven, restaurateur, CEO, and one of the most powerful business women in the Chicago area. She died September 23 at age 73 after suffering a stroke.

A true entrepreneur, Gin began her career with odd jobs after college, including a short stint as a Playboy Bunny waitress. But she eventually found a career in real estate in the 1980s, including owning several restaurants, such as Cafe Bernard in Lincoln Park. She was an early investor in loft properties in the now-hot Randolph Street Market area where restaurants are thriving.

But it was an encounter with a bad, half-frozen sweet roll on a business flight in 1982 that launched her journey to CEO of a multi-million dollar firm, Flying Food Group, Inc. As she related to Crain's Chicago Business recently, she felt airline food could be better, so she wrote to the chairman of Midway Airlines to say so, and ended up with a contract to supply meals to the airline. Some 30 years later, Flying Food serves more than 70 international airlines, including British Airways, Air France-KLM, Qantas and Royal Jordanian, as well as retail outlets such as Starbucks. Crain's reports her firm had \$435 million in revenue in 2013.

As an early member of Les Dames Chicago, Gin enjoyed discussing food trends, searching for ways to always improve the quality and selection of food from her company's 20 kitchens around the country.

Coming from an immigrant family (her parents owned a Chinese restaurant in Aurora), Gin was interested in immigrant issues and sat on the board of the Chicago Council of Global Affairs. She also served on the boards of many charities and businesses, including Chicago Botanic Gardens, DePaul University, Exelon, The Field Museum, The Foundation for the National Archives, Washington, D.C., and Rush University Medical Center.

She also headed the board of the William G. McGowan Charitable Fund, which advances the legacy of her late husband, who was chairman of MCI Communications. The Fund's board statement described Gin:

"Sue felt great responsibility to her husband's legacy, and her relentless passion for creative initiative—backed by her refusal to ever take 'no' for an answer—pushed the Fund in new directions. Though she is irreplaceable, the Fund can commit to emulating her 'can-do spirit,' scrupulous standards and essential generosity."

Meet your board part two

By Joan Reardon

A continuation of profiles of Les Dames Chicago board members:

Portia Belloc Lowndes

Who would have thought that Slow Food Chicago founder, Green City Market executive board member, 2015 Chef BBQ chairwoman, and active Les Dames d'Escoffier participant Portia Belloc Lowndes would wish for piano lessons as a Christmas gift this year? Those members who do not know her well might be a little surprised. However, those who do would just exchange knowing smiles. Portia is the modern day equivalent of the Renaissance woman.

A former owner of Pitchfork Productions, a farm-to-table event company, she specialized in dinners at farms located in the Midwest. She also was an executive director of the Heritage Prairie Farm, hosting special dinners and events there. At present she is owner of project FEAST, an event company that is focused on agritourism.

After founding Slow Food Chicago 15 years ago, she co-edited The Slow Food Guide to Chicago. Now she is working on her second book, "Farm to Table Kids: Grow, Cook, Eat," and hopes to have it completed by the summer of 2015. Thrilled to be living back in the city again, she would love to "wrangle her 'tween daughters and take them all over Chicago -- making them walk, divvy or train -- exploring new neighborhoods we haven't been."

Other favorite things? Although preparing sushi is not on her "to do" list, her favorite sushi restaurant in Chicago is Arami, "But sadly, I can barely get my daughters to eat cooked fish and the thought of raw fish makes them very green." And if she were ever to receive a dream gift, she would hop on a plane and head to Southeast Asia and visit Thailand and Vietnam because, "I have long been fascinated by the food, beauty and culture of this area; it has been number one on my bucket list for a very long time!"

Melissa Yen

While "craft" is the buzzword in today's culinary world, with a dizzying number of beers, cocktails, and artisan products available, Melissa Yen stands alone as the creator and purveyor of craft syrups. But her route to the success of Jo Snow Syrups at the Logan Square Farmer's Market was definitely a circuitous one.

As Melissa describes it, "I have owned other small businesses and they are always a little bit 'out of the norm.' I used to own a retail shop that sold somewhat-wacky stuff from artisans in other cultures." She sold wood carvings modeled on Balinese flying dragons, including one of a grandma holding a pie with wings. "It cracked me up!" she said. She also carried items from Mexico, starting with serious silver, tin, and carved masks. "Then it turned into Mexican wrestling masks and those cool vinyl publicity bags with chickens on them. I always seemed to end up on the light-hearted side of things." And to prove her point, she often dons classic "soda jerk" attire: paper-hat, suspenders, and bow tie, offering delicious syrups in the form of snow cones.

Her syrup-making days started while co-owning Vella Cafe in Logan Square, which she and her business partner closed in 2009. Melissa's obsession with a Mexican coffee drink called "Cafe de Olla" led her to make a syrup infused with brown sugar, cinnamon, orange, clove and molasses. More syrups followed, with combinations such as cardamom and rosewater or balsamic vinegar and black walnut. "My husband, my good friend and I came up with the business name on a road trip to Kansas City to check out a snow cone stand. I wanted this brand to be fun and quirky and light hearted. I wanted this brand to be 'me.' So, Jo Snow Syrups was born."

Her taste buds travel the world. "I often find my inspiration in other cultures," she said, "The Cardamom Rose Water is based on a Turkish coffee. The Fig Vanilla Black Pepper is inspired by the Mediterranean. I just love the food and flavors of other cultures, and I love to create. Jo Snow Syrups is the one that seems to work!" Spot on.

Catherine Koelling

Although she would shudder to think that her astrological sign reveals anything about her in any way, Catherine Koelling does indeed reflect her sign's attributes. "The Scorpio woman has great charm, allure, and inner strength, and is able to overcome most any obstacle in life. She comes across as self-confident and self-possessed, and she is intensely private, discrete and secretive. Soon she will learn everything about you, but later you will realize that she hasn't given you many details about herself -- that's Scorpio's natural reticence." Catherine doesn't encourage any press releases and shuns publicity. But her involvement and accomplishments in the suburban and Chicago culinary scene are not only considerable but also impressive.

She and her FORMER????? husband David bought the Greenery restaurant, a converted school house, in Barrington in 1986. Catherine tended the front of the house and David manned the kitchen. Chicago Tribune restaurant critic Phil Vettel wrote, "Catherine is as charming and vivacious a host as one could hope for. She seems genuinely delighted with each new arrival to her restaurant, and regular visitors often exchange hugs on the way in, or out, or both."

In 1985, she started the tradition of inviting others to join in on a complimentary Thanksgiving feast. The tradition later was passed on to the couple's second restaurant in Wauconda, Biloxi Grill, until its closing. "We didn't have any family in the area, so we just wanted to do something different," Catherine said. The meal has grown from feeding about 30 people to about 200 this year. HERITAGE WINES????????? Thinking about her membership in Les Dames d'Escoffier, Catherine says, "I have admired the Les Dames organization since I went to the first benefit at the Ritz Carlton back in the late '80s, and discovered such an incredible group of strong, successful women in the culinary field. I looked up to all the Les Dames. I feel very honored, both personally and professionally, to be volunteering with these women."

