



Les Dames d'Escoffier  
INTERNATIONAL



**Birmingham**

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Founded in 2013

[ldeibirmingham.org](http://ldeibirmingham.org)

February 2017

## President's Note

Dear All,

I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday season with family and friends. We sure did and now that the championship game is over, we are back to normality and business.

Our national LDEI website has been updated nicely so that you can listen to podcasts from our wonderful speakers at past conferences from 2008-2014. Please familiarize yourself with it. With just a click, you can enjoy the wealth of knowledge that we have archived. Explore Green Tables, Global Culinary Initiative, Media Contacts & Inquiries, LDEI Logos, Brochure PDFs, and Press Releases. Make it a habit to check the site regularly to see what is going on with LDEI. It is another way we can get ideas to keep our chapter growing.

On April 19, I hope to see all of you at our "All Member Meeting" at my home from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. to discuss our future in fundraising, scholarships, and mentoring. We will try our best to be efficient with our time so you aren't away from your families too long. LDEI chapter buttons (\$5) and shorter aprons (\$20) will be available.

Best always,  
Becky

## Galley and Garden Brunch



*January found Birmingham Dames gathered for a special Sunday brunch at Galley and Garden. It was a wonderful opportunity to catch up on holiday activities and discuss the 2017 programs that we have planned. We toasted to 2017 and our efforts to raise visibility of the Birmingham chapter. Special note was made of our many Dames who are leading the way in the food community.*

*Above, pictured left to right: Linda Godfrey, Sherron Goldstein, Susan Green, Beba Touloupis, Kerry Kelley, Mary Esther Carpenter, Becky Satterfield, Alexis Douglas, Ashley McMakin, Leigh Sloss-Corra, Susan Swagler, Gia McCollister, Angela Schmidt, Susan Nash Gilpin, and Martha Johnston*



## At the Table with Gia McCollister, VP Membership

By Christiana Roussel

To be in Gia McCollister's orbit is to constantly be ready for a life of sweet adventure. Born in Venezuela and travelling often, Gia spent time over the years in New York, London, Argentina, and Miami. In each city, she honed her skills in a variety of professional settings. "I am a self-taught baker but a professional sugar artist," she offers in her heady South American lilt. Her decorated cakes are a testament to the craft: rose blossoms the size of a baby's fist will melt on your tongue, peony petals seem to be spun out of nothing more than sighs and sugar, delicate pearlized scrollwork quietly glistens. Closed since March 2014, Gia's Cakes in Crestline Village was where brides' dreams became edible reality.

Since those Ladurée-green doors shut, McCollister has had the time to embark on a whole new set of adventures: becoming

an international grandmother; hopscotching the globe with her beloved husband, Porter; joining Les Dames d'Escoffier and taking on the important role of vice president, overseeing membership for the Birmingham chapter. She values her LDEI membership because "I want to give back to the community. I don't see the organization as merely a social club. I see it as an opportunity to help others, people who need a helping hand to move forward and be successful." Of our chapter, she adds, "LDEI Birmingham has an amazing group of intelligent, powerful, gracious, and visionary women ready to make a difference here."

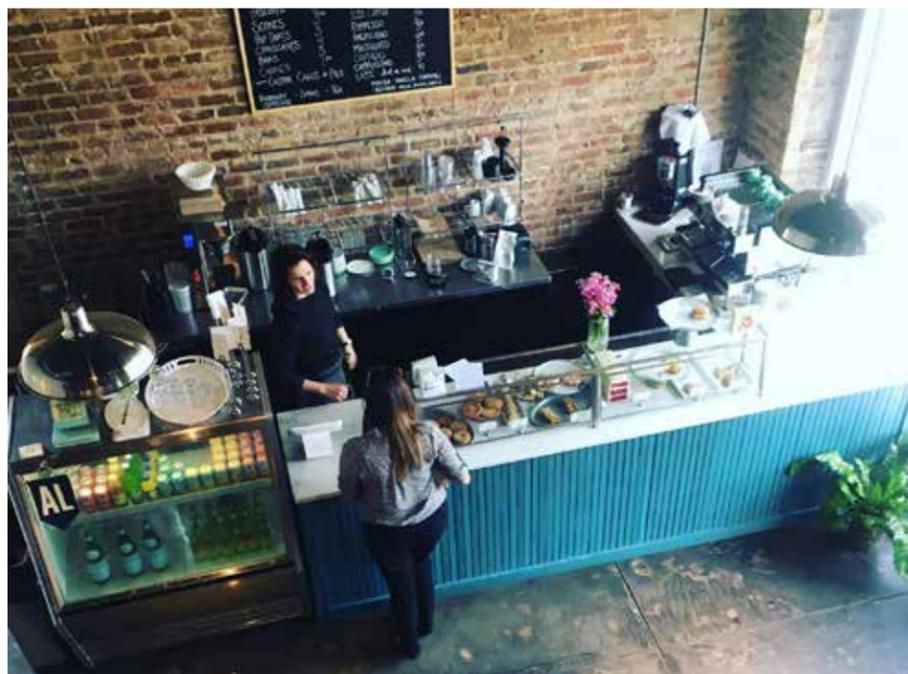
Gia has a clear vision of what she wants for our group and how she plays a seminal role in achieving these goals: "I want all members—existing and prospective—to really understand and embrace that being



part of this organization is not just something you add to your resume. It's to understand that our main goal is to help other women in the food business while improving people's lives. It is about giving a little of our busy time to make a difference in our community."

Her eyes dance with all of the possibilities. Of how we can grow and impact women's lives here in Birmingham and beyond, she notes, "Women helping women is a powerful thing."

## Lunch at Feast & Forest in Downtown Birmingham



On November 15, 2016, Dames Martha Johnston, Kathy Mezrano, Mary Clayton Carl, Gia McCollister, Katherine Cobbs, Linda Godfrey, Jan Gautro, Brooke Bell, and Rachel West met at Feast & Forest for lunch and group catch-up. They enjoyed fresh salads, soups, and sandwiches, and some wonderful baked treats, including an amazing apricot and rosemary tart.

## Meet Our New Members!

Our chapter gained 10 new members in August 2016. Here, get to know five of them a little better. The remaining five will be featured in the next newsletter. Interviews by Christiana Roussel.

### Deb Wise

**Date of birth:** September 8, 1952  
**Place of birth:** Sacramento, CA  
**College & professional school(s) attended/major or degree earned:** The Culinary Institute of America, Hyde Park, NY, degree in baking and pastry arts

**Current position:** Recipe developer and tester at Time Inc. Food Studios

**How did you get your start?** Baking and making desserts have always been my default for happy times, depression, celebration and sorrow, so when I decided to change careers it was a natural to get a degree in baking and pastry arts. My intention was to make my new career in a test kitchen, and thankfully, this happened.



**What do you enjoy about your current position?** I love the variety of what I do. One day it may be developing cakes for *Southern Living* magazine and the next day it will be a 15-minute meal for Weight Watchers. I also love my work environment and the people I work with; everyone shares a desire to do our best for all of the brands we represent and create content for.  
**What does success look like to you?** Looking forward to going to work; my job feels more like a creative outlet than labor.

**What do you want people to know about you?** I would love to join or start a supper club.  
**What do you like to do in your free time?** I'm an avid reader, always looking for a good book recommendation. I sew for my granddaughter. I was a golfer, but Alabama is too humid for me.

**If you could plan your last meal, what would it be?** Traditional wedge salad; wine, thyme, and mushroom slow-cooked short ribs; mashed potatoes; coconut cake with Swiss meringue icing  
**Bonus!** I've been married to Barry Wise for 15 years. We have three grown daughters and two grandchildren.

### Tiffany Denson

**Date of birth:** September 14, 1973  
**Place of birth:** Clearwater, FL  
**College & professional school(s) attended/major or degree earned:** B.A. from Auburn University

**Current position:** Founder and owner, T'Lish Dressings, Marinades, and Sauces

**How did you get your start?** I have always loved cooking and entertaining. When tough times hit financially, I used my love of cooking (and a tried and true recipe) to launch my food brand.  
**What do you enjoy about your current position?** I enjoy the creat-



*"True success to me is having the opportunity to take your accomplishment and experiences and use them to spur and encourage others in their own journey toward success."*

ing of new products, testing them and developing recipes around them. Talking with customers and the folks who work within the industry is always a highlight!

**What do you want people to know about you?** You will never catch me using a recipe unless I am baking, of course! Oh, but I really don't like baking!

**What are you most passionate and enthusiastic about?** The passion that drives me day in and day out is the desire to truly taste the journey for which God has placed me. Each day is a gift and finding the eternal value in that day is what fuels my passion.  
**Bonus!** Married to Rush Denson for 20 years. Children: Rush Jr, 16; Quinn, 12; Sadie, 21/2

# Ashley Tarver

**Date of birth:** October 12, 1983  
**Place of birth:** Birmingham, AL  
**College & professional school(s) attended/major or degree earned:** Rhodes College, B.A., Spanish language and literature; Oxford University: Oxford, England. Greek and Roman literature, art, history and philosophy and La Escuela Internacional de Cocina Mausi Sebess; Buenos Aires, Argentina.  
**Current position:** Founder and owner, Copper Pot Kitchen  
**How did you become interested in the restaurant/hospitality industry?** I was living in D.C. attending these awful prep classes for the LSAT. I was having much more fun cooking with friends. Law school went out the window and shortly after I moved to Buenos Aires to attend cooking school.



*“If I didn’t have any obligations or a care in the world, I would pack my bag and travel ‘til the end of my days.”*

**How did you get your start?** I staged in two 3-Michelin starred restaurants in San Sebastian, Spain. It was brutal, but it didn’t diminish my passion.  
**What do you enjoy about your current position?** Three years ago, I started Copper Pot Kitchen infused olive oils. The coolest thing I do is manufacturing which fascinates me. I’ve learned more about corrugated boxes, wax formulation, the glass industry, and sourcing product than anyone would ever care to know.  
**What are you most passionate and enthusiastic about?** Travel. If I didn’t have any obligations or

a care in the world, I would pack my bag and travel ‘til the end of my days. I like dusty, gritty, market-haggling type travel. I’ve been to some amazing places and my list keeps growing. I’d have to say that preparing the bottle food for baby elephants in the Malaysian jungle then watching the elephants bathe in the river was probably one of the coolest experiences I’ll ever have.  
**If you could plan your last meal, what would it be?** Brace yourself... my grandmother’s twice baked potatoes, Kraft macaroni and cheese and my squash casserole. I might as well go out with a lot of cheese!

# Laura Zapalowski

**Date of birth:** February 23, 1978  
**Place of birth:** Nashville, TN  
**College & professional school(s) attended/major or degree earned:** B.S. in nutrition/dietetics from Samford University; Culinary Arts Degree from the Institute of Culinary Education in New York City.  
**Current position:** Co-owner Homewood Gourmet, freelance food stylist  
**How did you get your start?** My granddad owned a fast-casual restaurant and my mom worked for him in high school. She later made pies for a local barbecue restaurant in Birmingham. I always enjoyed watching them cook and inherited their love of food and cooking. I started out volunteering and later running Wednesday night dinners



at several churches in Birmingham. That was my first taste of cooking for and serving a large group of people.  
**What do you enjoy about your current position?** I currently co-own a fast-casual restaurant with my husband and am also a freelance food stylist. I love having the flexibility to do both jobs. At the restaurant I enjoy creating new menu items and keeping things organized. I also love the creativity that the freelance jobs offer.  
**What does success look like to you?** I feel successful in that I

enjoy what I do everyday and am able to provide for my children. I love making people happy and comfortable through food. Success to me is finding joy in my everyday tasks.  
**What do you like to do in your free time?** I enjoy reading, swimming laps, and spending time with my kids.  
**If you had one week free of all obligations and \$5000, where would you go and what would you do?** I would love to go on a self-guided tour through Cajun country (Louisiana) and the Boudin trail. I would try all of the different types of boudin sausage and boudin products along the way. I think I could eat a lot of boudin with \$5000!  
**Bonus!** I am married to Chris Zapalowski and we have 2 children, Ellis, 8-year-old boy, and Liza, 4-year-old girl.

# Sonthe Burge

**Date of birth:** December 21, 1957  
**Place of birth:** Pensacola, FL  
**College & professional school(s) attended/major or degree earned:** B.S. in food science and human nutrition from the University of Florida; M.S. in allied health services from University of North Florida.  
**Current position:** Registered dietitian and licensed nutritionist  
**How did you become interested in the restaurant/hospitality industry?** I am the daughter of a pharmacist and granddaughter of Greek immigrants in the grocery and restaurant business. I learned the joy of hospitality at a young age from my parents and grandparents. My mother loved to entertain guests in our home. Mom let me help her prepare wonderful Greek appetizers and desserts. During



my teenage years, I worked at my dad’s drug store. Working at the drug store inspired me to be a pharmacist. I started college as a chemistry and pharmacy major. During my sophomore year of college I took Introduction to Nutrition as an elective. I had no idea the class would change my life. After learning about nutrition and the relationship to food and wellness, I decided I would rather help individuals stay well by eating right instead of giving them pills when they are sick. I started my junior year of college at UF as a food science and nutrition major in

the College of Agriculture. My dad was supportive but his favorite joke is that I started in pharmacy and graduated a farmer. I wish I had paid more attention in my Agriculture and farming classes. Farming is important and something I am very interested in.  
**What do you want people to know about you?** I want people to know that I am not the food police. When people hear I am a dietitian nutritionist they feel the need to tell me about their favorite superfood, diet or secret food confession. This is odd because I don’t believe in super foods, diets or would never want anyone to feel guilty about something they ate.  
**What are you most passionate and enthusiastic about?** Becoming Yiayia!! (Greek for grandmother).

# Events Calendar

Monday, February 13	6 p.m.	Book Club: <i>Yes, Chef</i> by Marcus Samuelsson at Jan Gautro’s home 224 Oakmont Road, 35244
Sunday, February 19	3 p.m.	Member meeting (mandatory) Satterfield’s restaurant 3161 Cahaba Heights Road, 35243
Wednesday, March 15	11 a.m.	Lunch at WE Café 1229 Cotton Avenue SW (park and enter in the back)
Sunday, April 9	Time TBD	Tour and picnic, Birmingham Botanical Gardens
Saturday, April 22	Time TBD	12th Annual Gumbo Gala judging Sloss Furnace

# Book Club

By Martha Johnston

*Kitchens of the Great Midwest*, J. Ryan Stadal’s debut novel, was chosen by our LDEI Book Club for the November 2016 meeting. Many connected to the cultural heritage, exposure to a variety of foods and their history, as well as the entrepreneurship tract the author developed through the main character, Eva. The discussion centered on Midwest foodways, and male versus female character development. Since the book is ultimately about being true to your own “food roots,” attendees shared some of their family favorites including White Bean Soup with Andouille and Collards, Hatch Chile Dip, and Peanut Butter Bars featured in the novel.

# Let's Toast



Dame Tiffany Denson's newly rebranded line of T.Lish dressings, which debuted in January.

**Idie Hastings**, founder of Miss Coco's One Lucky Dog Treats, says that sales of these healthy products are continuing to grow and allow her to make contributions to Hand In Paw non-profit organization where she is on the board. If you are interested in trying these for your four-footed

babies, the treats are available at OvenBird and online at [www.OneLuckyDogTreats.com](http://www.OneLuckyDogTreats.com)

**Tiffany Denson** rebranded her line of dressings and introduced two new products to the brand in January. They are Classic Caesar Vinaigrette and BBQ Vinaigrette.

T.Lish now has a line of five all-natural vinaigrettes and dressings.

**Leigh Sloss-Corra** tells us that The Market at Pepper Place will be holding a Winter Farmers' Market inside the Pepper Place Pop-Up every Saturday, January 28-April 1, 8am-noon. Offerings will include a wide variety of fresh produce and herbs, eggs, pasture-raised meats, free-range chickens, bread, pastries, cheeses, soups, honey, and salsa, plus Hero Doughnuts and Domestique Coffee. (Pepper Place is hoping to have seafood from Bayou la Batre as well, including oysters!) The Winter Market is a first for Pepper Place Market and the start of what will make it officially year-round. Details at [www.pepperplacemarket.com](http://www.pepperplacemarket.com).

**Sherron Goldstein** says that couples cooking classes are becoming more popular. A group of men recently attended one of Sherron's classes, and if their smiles were any indication, they had a grand time.

## Dames Recommend

*Susan Swagler*

A new favorite recipe: **Better-than-Takeout Butter Chicken** from Tasting Table. It's "so, so easy...in a slow cooker!" She served it with saffron rice and spent-grain naan. The biggest surprise: no butter in the recipe! Link: <https://www.tastingtable.com/cook/recipes/slow-cooker-butter-chicken-recipe>

*Tiffany Denson*

Where to go: **South Beach Miami**  
Where to stay: The Confidante, a

newly renovated Hyatt property  
Where to eat: Lucali for Italian, Taquiza for street tacos, and Cecconi's for happy hour.

*Leigh Sloss-Corra*

Where to go: **Bushwick** neighborhood in Brooklyn  
Where to eat: Faro, which serves beautiful hand-made pastas, incredible sauces, mouth-watering and fresh starters, main dishes from wood-fired ovens. It's not terribly expensive and worth every penny.

Other places: Le Garage (a new French spot), Roberta's (pizza), Moto (pizza), and Foster's Sundry (breakfast or coffee all day).

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