

## Nashville Trip Reports

### From: Marilyn Tauscher

A preconference behind the scenes tour of three signature hotels in Nashville set the tone for an inspiring, educational and entertaining conference. Stop one was the 115 year-old Hermitage Hotel, run by Nashville Dame Dee Patel and the site where Tennessee was the deciding vote to ratify the 19th amendment. A last stop at the hotel was a visit to the men's room, gathering around the shoeshine station for a photo. Hey, if Kathie Lee and Hoda had their picture taken here, we wanted one, too! This picture is a hallmark for the fun we had, and conversations shared among Dames from Hawaii to Canada to Mexico. Before we left, Dee treated us to a Bloody Mary and smoked pastrami, tomato jam and quail egg breakfast sandwich. Remarkable food continued as we were warmly welcomed into the Noelle Nashville, with a trip to their speakeasy hidden bar, and the Opryland Resort and Convention Center, the largest non-gaming hotel in the continental U.S.



### From: Pam Powell

As the proud recipient of the LDEI grant to attend the 2019 Nashville LDEI conference I was not prepared for the gift I was given. I had no idea how important and probably life changing this event would be for me. I own and run an organic salad dressing company, so finding time in my crazy schedule for something like this was difficult, but I was going to make it work because I love me some country music and southern food. That was all I expected to experience. Boy was I naive and wrong.

At 63 years old and spending the last 12 years schlepping anything and everything including the kitchen sink to grocery stores, events and food shows I have been feeling a bit schlepped. I am ready for some younger help, and some change, but even thinking about all that seemed overwhelming until I got to Nashville. I took a day to visit Germantown and to lunch Alfresco on a beautiful sunny 75 degree Autumn day with a MN high school friend whose daughter works as a songwriter in the Nashville music biz & to have a taste of Nashville at a couple of the local

women owned Nashville restaurants was a treat, but then to 2-step (I am not kidding, you couldn't help tapping a toe) my way up Broadway (2 miles to the hotel) to all of the amazing music being played all day and night by the wonderful & talented songsters and musicians that you couldn't find anywhere else in the world but Nashville. The joy I begin to feel was such a blessing and a relief. But that was just the beginning. As I met up with my Minnesota Dames at the hotel, the real reason for me to be attending this conference began. We all had our own schedules of conference meetings and outings to attend, but we were all able to gather at breakfast, lunch and dinner and we definitely made the most of our time together.

I have been a member of MN LDEI for the last 5 years and I have attended many of monthly meetings & events as often as my busy schedule allows me. The reason I joined the Les Dames d'Escoffier wasn't for networking reasons, it was because our companies mission for giving back to our community was right in line with Les Dames d'Escoffier's mission, and to really make a difference you need a whole kitchen full of strong women cooks working hard all together to complete the successful recipe. Salad Girl has been able to participate in our local MN Chapter annual Dame It! fundraising event for the last 5 years and we finally feel like we are really making a dent in our community and giving women a step up to success in the food industry. By attending this conference, I was able to learn from my MN Dames why this gathering is so important to our chapter. It renews our energy together. You listen to the stories of the local female Nashville chefs and restaurateurs and you realize that we are all parts of our powerful whole.

It warms your heart to get up in the early morning hours to gather together at our MN Dames table in the conference dining room with a cup strong coffee and all of a sudden we are being greeted & revved up by a local transgender songster dressed up like Patsy Cline singing along to a rousing and **stadium loud** rendition of Sisters Sledge: ***We are family, I got all my sisters with me, We are family, Get up everybody and sing!***

I looked around at my table and watched as all of our MN Dames (Merrilyn Tauscher, Cindy Jurgensen, Nikki Erpelding, Ingrid Gangestad, and Joan Donatelle) pop up and start dancing by their chairs and share in the magical moment. Yes, we are family, all of my Les Dames Sisters and me!

All of the key note speakers were on point. All the adversity we see in the food industry as women is shared and surmounted by all of us. Together we set the table for change, growth and hospitality.

I am forever changed and will grow from this event! Thank You Dames!

**MOCKTAIL LOVE:** Of course Nashville is not only full of the Spirit of Southern Hospitality, but it is full of Spirits meaning the Liquor kind-but Nashville Les Dames were soooo gracious and thoughtful to also remember the designated driver Dames and the non-drinker Dames when it came to sipping on something special without booze. The Tito Vodka Dames offered us this beautiful Spiritless Autumn Mule Mocktail featuring Fresh Local Apple Cider topped with a

splash of and a yummy & spicy Fever Tree ginger beer with a darling cinnamon stir stick. I felt special, it was refreshing and not a soda with high fructose corn syrup. I was delighted and touched by their smarts and their hospitality! Thanks Tito Vodka [www.titosvodka.com](http://www.titosvodka.com). and Nashville Les Dames for making this sober Dame feel like part of the party!



**From: Cindy Jurgensen**



Thank you, MN Dames, for helping send your VP to the Nashville conference, one of the best I've attended for educational content. It was also festive and fun!

Friday morning's opening session began with a drag queen dancing to Sister Sledge's "We Are Family", arranged by Cambridge, MN-born Ann Stratte, President of LDEI (and Washington DC chapter member) who just transferred the gavel to Cleveland dynamo Bev Shaffer.

LDEI founder Carol Brock with MN Dame Ingrid Gangestad. Ingrid just began a two-year term on the international board as one of three Chapter Board Liaisons (CBL's) – thank you Ingrid!



Between the fantastic pre-conference session "Behind the Scenes" at three hotels (The Hermitage Hotel, Noelle Nashville and Gaylord Opryland Resort) I learned that Dame Dee Patel, Manager of the Hermitage Hotel, is also a proud supporter of "Woman's Hour" author Elaine Weiss. Elaine stayed several weeks at the Hermitage Hotel as she



researched the women's suffrage movement and the part the Hermitage Hotel, and Nashville, Tennessee, played as the crucial 36<sup>th</sup> state to ratify the 19th Amendment, making women's suffrage legal in the United States.

To get us in the mood of the era, a coconut cookie and cup of tea (mostly Jack Daniels!!) was on each seat, same as the 1920 bribe to legislators and lobbyists who, along with the pro and anti-suffrage women, all stayed at the Hermitage Hotel!



We learned from and enjoyed talks by Dame/Chef/TV personality Carla Hall  
<https://www.carlahall.com/>



Dame/Celebrity Chef/Restaurateur Maneet Chauhan  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maneet\\_Chauhan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maneet_Chauhan)



and Becca Stevens, the very inspiring CNN Hero/Author and Founder of Thistle Farms <https://thistlefarms.org/>

This is a very small sample of what the Nashville conference offered. And an encouragement for members to attend future conferences, if at all possible. They are fantastic opportunities to learn, share, network and make friends, not only across the US but British Columbia, Ontario, London, Paris and Mexico! Next year's conference will be in New York City. We had six MN Dames represented this trip. Let's go for more in NYC!

