
The Sonoma Table, May 2023

1 message

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The Sonoma Table

Farmers Market Season Is Upon Us!



North of San Francisco: the gentle breeze and hum of bees heralds a beloved annual showcase. Sonoma's Farmers Market season delivers a breathtaking bounty of sublimely fresh veggies and ripe fruit. Breathtaking in its sheer bounty and variety, every flower and bag of zucchini bears the reassuring handshake of local farmers. So gather your reusable bags and baskets to support family farmers, minimize environmental impact, and nourish ourselves and our community.

[Sonoma Farmers' Markets](#) are as plentiful as they are legendary. Many of our favorite markets run only through the summer months, beginning in May and continuing into October. Not to be outdone, year-round markets include the [Santa Rosa Original](#), [Mercadito](#), [Oakmont](#), and [Farmers Lane Certified Farmers' Markets](#) in Santa Rosa; [Petaluma East Side](#), [Sebastopol](#), and [Sonoma Valley Farmers' Markets](#) further afield in our lovely county. [Sonoma's seasonal Tuesday Market](#) and [Santa Rosa Wednesday Night Market](#) both offer live music and food trucks for an experience fully equipped to entertain you all evening.

Getting closer to the source is as easy as swinging by a farm. Sonoma County corrals information for the plethora of farms in our county on the [Farm Trails website](#). From flowers and bees to fruits and cheese, there's not much you can't find. Or, if a guided expedition is more your speed, [Dame Alexandra Fox](#) curates the cornucopia of North Bay bounty at [Food & Farm Tours](#).

In the vein of doing less and doing it better, specialty farms like [Dame Gayle Sullivan's Dry Creek Peach](#) and the saffron specialists at [Peace & Plenty Farm](#) in Lake County offer focused lenses on their treasures. As does [Radical Family Farms](#), showcasing Asian heritage vegetables and a stunning flower CSA. Rare is the soul who can pass up locally produced olive oil, so swing by [McEvoy Ranch](#) on your way.



Marrying a vinous claim to fame with its ranch and farm roots, [Napa's Farmers' Markets](#) offer a different perspective from Downtown Napa and Calistoga's year round markets to Long Meadow Ranch which marries viticulture to agriculture each season. Don't let the preponderance of wineries fool you, [Napa's stunning Culinary Gardens](#) hold court on their own unique terms.

Look no further than [Marin for a stunning array of markets](#) during your next pass through their marvelous coastline and undulating hills. [Pt. Reyes](#) offers live music and a spacious picnic area to enjoy a quick bite on site before meandering off for oysters nearby. Meanwhile, heading north, Mendocino offers several year-round farmers' markets in Fort Bragg, Ukiah, and Willits.

No matter your culinary or cultural need, there's a farmers' market near you and for you. We've pulled the [information for Farmers' Markets](#) near and wide for ease of access.

—Written by *Dame Maisie Lyman*

Member of the Month



Dame Michelle Wood, Mentorship

It's about a year since I've know Michelle. She was catering a friend's wedding in Healdsburg. This was a small family wedding and everyone was everywhere, which can often ruffle the feathers of the hired staff. Michelle was the opposite. She was calm, friendly and organized. Her staff included three young women who were training with her. Often at a wedding, you'll see the well seasoned staff working because weddings invite all sorts of disasters. Michelle calmly stated that this is the best way to mentor and teach someone who is just learning. Good point. I met with Michelle later to hear more about her business and her aspirations. I got such a kick out of hearing about her life, her work, the nonprofit she started and her dream of expanding her business empire which especially includes giving back to the community.

During the Kincade fire of 2019, Michelle had the opportunity to volunteer as the kitchen manager for a full week, cooking breakfast and then also serving lunch and dinner (provided by World Central Kitchen) for upwards of 2000 evacuees.

Michelle routinely packages up and delivers meals to the homeless encampments in Sonoma County and travels to larger cities to prepare and deliver nutritious hot meals to all in need. Providing the much needed nourishment to people in crisis blends her passions in a way that fills her soul.

Let's learn a little more about Michelle!

How'd you get into the food industry?

While working my way through college, I was employed by an organic farmer and then soon after a goat dairy, Redwood Hill Farm. I became their head cheesemaker and cheese plant manager. I worked at many farmer's markets, food and wine events all over the Bay Area. It is truly when my love of food sparked.

Who Inspired you to get into the food industry and who inspires you still?

I had a long career in laboratory management where I cooked quite often for my employees. I also was on a cycling team for many years and would volunteer to cook for the team events. Many of my friends, co-workers and employees encouraged me to take a chance and start a catering business.

When I get positive feedback from people that is unsolicited, it continues to inspire me to be more creative with my food.

Is there a woman in the food industry that inspires you?

There are so many women in the food industry that inspire me but the first woman to inspire me was Alice Waters. She would shop at the farmer's market in Berkeley and stop by and purchase cheese from my stand. I was always very intrigued by her work with Edible Schoolyard. It was early on in the time of people embracing organically grown produce along with sustainability practices and Alice Waters was on the forefront of this movement.

Talk about your accomplishments, accolades, etc

Educated and trained with a long successful career in the sciences, I come from a foundation of over 20 years, managing high throughput laboratories. My strong entrepreneurial mind, combined with the love of food inspired my transformation into a self-taught chef and owner of a successful catering business, Dim Sum and Then Sum, which I established in 2014. Only ever being able to run the business part time, I was ready to launch into the next phase of my life and open a café and retail store front.

I have committed time to volunteering for non-profit groups focused on the system impacted, homelessness, poverty, minority inclusion, and juvenile advocacy. I plan to incorporate a non-profit umbrella that will support the underprivileged with a culinary training program and incubator kitchen that can mentor individuals to run their own microbusinesses.

Anything else you'd like to share?

I feel it is important to share my skills, views and ideologies by mentoring our youth and returning citizens about how we, food purveyors, have a responsibility, not only to provide excellence in the culinary arts but how we can do it sustainably while supporting food security, accessibility and the reduction of food waste. Many of us have the privilege to indulge in opulent meals however EVERY person in the world has the right for ready and affordable access to healthy, sustainable food.

What do you enjoy about being a Dame?

I enjoy being in an organization with so many talented and driven women. I appreciate that we all have busy lives yet still are trying to find time to support not only each other but also give back to the community.

* * *

Michelle was inducted into our chapter in July 2022. Since she has been a Dame she has been volunteering with the Mentorship Committee. She was one of the Dames who attended the high school panel discussions for the Healdsburg High School Internship Program, and has recently volunteered to cook for the new collaborative program with Sonoma Family Meal.

—Written by Dame Doralice Handal

Report from Greece!



Today Dame Lisa Stavropoulos, along with Dame Irene Moore from the South Florida Chapter, returns from Greece after leading LDEI's first dual chapter fundraiser! We look forward to hearing more and seeing the amazing photos.

Dames from Florida, Atlanta and Sonoma enjoyed 10 days exploring the wine and foods of Northern Greece, the Peloponnese, Attica and Crete, including winery visits, exclusive gourmet dinners at Greece's top restaurants, culinary tours, and even a traditional lunch in the Cretan mountains including suiting up for a visit to a beekeeping farm! Anything it takes to raise money for our chapters! :) Kalo taxedi, Dames!

Upcoming Events & Reminders

Julia's Table: June 8th, 5pm-7pm, Jackson's Bar & Oven, Santa Rosa

Member Meeting: July 18, Dry Creek Peach, Healdsburg

"It's so beautifully arranged on the plate – you know someone's fingers have been all over it." --Julia Child



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