



Southern Foodways Alliance

Center for the Study of Southern Culture

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Dear SFA Members,

Happy 2005! It is with great pride and excitement that I write to let you know about the very productive meeting your SFA board recently attended. We made some very significant and important decisions which I want to share. I also want to update you on a couple of exciting initiatives:

Chefs' Regional Dinners

- Prior to our board meeting, SFA was the beneficiary of an elegant weekend fundraiser hosted by our own John Flear and Blackberry Farm. The event was highlighted by a printed compilation of oral histories relating to local purveyors, whose goods were showcased at a gala dinner. The histories were researched, written and photographed by board member Fred Sauceman, who managed to capture, within this taste of SFA, what our organization is all about. The result was an increased awareness of and enthusiasm for our work, as well as a fundraising total of nearly \$8,000.
- Your board met for two days and focused on our short-term and long-term planning. One thing we decided, following the success of the Blackberry event, is to replicate regional chefs' dinners at other locations. We identified a sub-committee to work on planning and developing at least one similar event between now and July. Stay tuned for details. Our belief is that such dinners provide us with a means to showcase our chefs, our philosophy, our foodways, and our oral histories – and raise funds for SFA at the same time.

Staffing, Oral History and Cornbread Nation

- Your board also took exciting steps towards developing, formalizing, and supporting our oral history initiatives and programs. We committed to raising the funds needed to support a full-time oral historian as well as upgrade the assistant director position (currently held by Mary Beth Lasseter) from part-time to full-time. Our goals for

expanding our oral history program are high, and your board believes it is time to put our money where our mouths are.

- As an example of the expansion of our work, we are exploring an opportunity to publish our oral histories on a regular basis via a newspaper column. This will enable a broad audience to learn about our region's foodways. We're also working in collaboration with Mississippi Public Broadcasting to produce a radio show. Both the newspaper series and the radio series will be entitled, appropriately enough, *Cornbread Nation*.

We need financial support from our members to fuel this growth.

Our vision is to expand the oral history program to additional academic institutions, develop an accessible archive, and aggressively research and collect as many oral histories as possible. While we are working hard developing longer-term solutions to funding, we have immediate needs for supporting these positions, including our desire to capture oral histories of each of SFA's founding members. Each day that we lose our region's keepers of the flame represents losses of tradition, knowledge and cultural learning.

Our short term goal is to raise \$100,000 by July 1. We need your help. Please do so by way of the return envelope. Make your checks payable to SFA, and remember all contributions are tax deductible.

Finally, I wanted you to know we have revised our New Orleans field trip dates. They are now July 7-10. Our members in NOLA are working diligently to put together what promises to be an exciting time – from sugar plantations to the French Quarter. We've also set 2005 symposium dates for October 27-30, 2005, with the Delta Divertissement taking place October 25-26. Symposium committee chair Adrian Miller gave us a preview, and it's going to be incredible.

I commend your board members for their commitment, hard work, creativity, passion, and thoughtfulness. I look forward to seeing you throughout 2005, and I thank you in advance for your support of the work of SFA.

Yours around the table,



Elizabeth Sims
SFA President

P.S. Although we are asking you for financial support for our organization, your board wanted to do something, as a food organization, to help our neighbors in Indonesia take steps towards rebuilding their lives. Toward that end, we have purchased a cow from Heifer International (www.heifer.org) in support of tsunami relief efforts. The cow will provide much-needed milk to a community. And her offspring will be shared with others.