

CornbreadNation

Number 5-Fall 2001

The Newsletter of the Southern Foodways Alliance

ELECTION RESULTS

This is a time of transition for the SFA. Leah Chase, Ronni Lundy, Kathy Starr, and Frank Stitt will retire from the board this year. The nominating committee, Fritz Blank, Nathalie Dupree, Damon Lee Fowler, Marlene Osteen, and Mindy Merrell, faced a difficult challenge to fill five seats on the Board of Directors. They established a fair and uniform set of criteria for considering candidates for board nomination that was applied to everyone, even incumbent board members. Chief among those criteria was a strong sense of dedication to the SFA. Other criteria included:

1. Active participation in SFA programs. Candidates must have attended at least two SFA events at the time of consideration.
2. Experience at working with or on a Board of Directors.
3. Willingness to actively fill a board seat. If the candidate was an incumbent board member, this was measured by active participation in at least two board meetings over a one-year period.
4. Diversity.

The following candidates were selected as our board slate: Jennie Ashlock, Jessica Harris, Martha Johnston (incumbent), Joyce King, Tim Patridge (incumbent), Donna Pierce, Matt Rowley, and Psyche Williams-Forson.

Elected to a two-year term were Harris, Johnston, Patridge, Pierce, and Rowley. They will be installed at our annual symposium. Please join the SFA in welcoming them and thanking them for their dedication to the cause.

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

I hope this letter finds you all well and that your family and friends are safe.

I ask you to turn your attention to the business of the SFA. Fundraising, event planning, and governance may seem insignificant pursuits in light of the recent terrorist actions, but we need not lose sight of this group's ambitions and accomplishments.

The SFA was born in the summer of 1999 at a gathering of 50 Southern food enthusiasts and has blossomed into the thriving, vibrant organization we know today. We all are aware of previous attempts to make this concept work. Sidebar bickering, innuendo, and questions about fiduciary oversight nagged previous organizations. But this time was different. With the support of The University of Mississippi, a very strong, involved, and supportive board and an equally diligent executive director, we have matured into an organization that matters, run with a strong commitment to member services.

Throughout my administration, strict rules of governance, an open and democratic balloting process, and dedication to a greater goal have been my bailiwicks. Whether the question is as simple as accepting an invitation to cosponsor an event or as challenging as approving the process for electing leadership, our actions have taken their cues from the founding mission statement: "To celebrate, teach, preserve, and promote the diverse food cultures of the American South."

We realized, however, that while the 50 founding members did an excellent job of establishing the overall theme and direction for the organization, the details—including the election process, operations, timelines, and establishment of bylaws—were left for the board to flesh out. You may recall from my last letter that the board has spent much energy in an effort to formalize policy and procedures for governance. You might also recall that we worked to secure clerical help and generate operating funds, which would, in turn, facilitate the board's goal of improving member services. We defined member services by specific objectives, again derived from our mission statement:

- Celebrate: Refine newsletter and expand content. Expand and broaden scope of symposium.
- Teach: Inaugurate Field Trips. Establish virtual foodways library on Web site. Improve resource center/community outreach. Incorporate students into symposium.
- Preserve: Begin oral history campaign. Incorporate oral history session into symposium.
- Promote: Revise and maintain Web site. Inaugurate annual SFA compendium/journal.

I am pleased to say that we have made great headway with regard to each of these goals. We have a new Web site. The first draft of the virtual foodways library is live on the Web. With the support of the O. Henry Hotel, Biltmore Estate, Red Oak Brewery, and White Lily, we hosted a magnificent inaugural Field Trip. With the support of Glory Foods, we are offering three student scholarships to the symposium. Our newsletter, *Cornbread Nation*, has been revised and a quarterly production schedule has been established. An oral history campaign is in the works and oral history programming has been incorporated into the symposium. And we have reached an agreement with the University of North Carolina Press to publish an annual compendium of the best writing and thinking about Southern food culture.

We anticipate a further shift from the mechanics of building our infrastructure to more strategic and creative endeavors. To conclude this phase of our growth, the bylaws have been posted on the SFA Web site for approval by the members. The board has approved these bylaws. If you wish to offer an amendment to the bylaws, I must receive your amendment on or before October 18. Three members in good standing must sign a proposed amendment. The bylaws and any amendments will be voted upon on Saturday morning during the general meeting. All members—even those not attending the symposium—may attend and vote. Those members not able to attend may register their approval by means of proxy. The final version of the bylaws will then be posted to the Web and written notice given to all members.

Please feel free to contact me with your comments, concerns, and suggested agenda items. We will rely upon the amendment process whenever necessary to update the bylaws until we have a document that resonates with our members and simultaneously shapes the SFA into a truly inclusive organization.

See you in October,
Toni Tipton-Martin
President, SFA Board of Directors

GLORY FOODS SCHOLARSHIPS

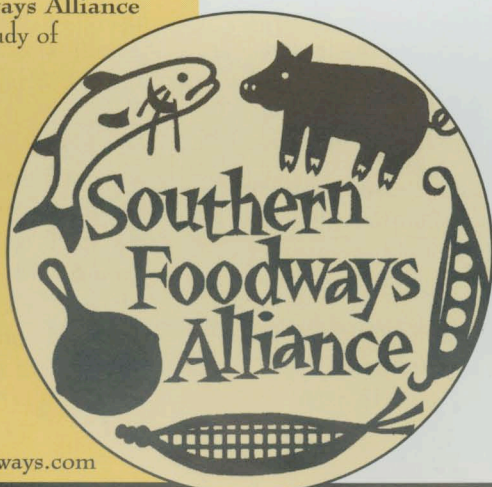
TO SOUTHERN FOODWAYS SYMPOSIUM ANNOUNCED

Glory Food invites three students to be their guests at the fourth annual Southern Foodways Symposium, to be held October 25-28 on the campus of The University of Mississippi in Oxford. Three scholarships will be awarded to African American students pursuing a college degree in the culinary arts or a related field. Winners will receive a complimentary pass to the conference (\$325 value) and a travel and accommodations stipend of \$575.

Scholarships will be awarded to the three best 100-word responses to these questions: How do you plan to apply the traditions of Southern cookery and culture to your work? When cooking, what is your favorite spin on a traditional Southern recipe? And how would you benefit from a four-day conference that explores connections between the farm and the table?

These scholarships are sponsored by Glory Foods of Columbus, Ohio, a manufacturer and distributor of Southern-style canned vegetables as well as frozen entrees and side dishes—all of which are inspired by Southern recipes and traditions. The company's president, Bill Williams, is a graduate of the Culinary Institute of America and is committed to enhancing the presence of African Americans in the food industry.

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Letter from the Vice President

As many of you already know, I assumed the responsibilities of Vice President this past spring and will actively take on the duties of the Vice President this October. Part of those duties will be as active liaison between the president and committee chairmen. With this new set of responsibilities, it will no longer be possible for me to serve on an individual committee. As of October, I will step down from the membership and nominating committees, which I have chaired for the last 18 months. During my tenure as chair of both committees, I talked to many of you who wanted to roll up your sleeves and get to work for the SFA. This is your chance. We need active members of all these committees, and many of them will need committed individuals who are willing to serve as chair.

To that end, I invite you to join me for a brief gathering at the close of the Saturday morning general member meeting during the symposium. We will work to match member interests and SFA needs in a fashion that suits all concerned. In advance of that gathering, please take the time to drop me a note at damonleeis@home.com and tell me which of the following committees interests you.

Sincerely,
Damon Lee Fowler
Vice-President, SFA Board of Directors

NOMINATING – This group has worked hard to create the template for SFA elections and nominating processes. Going forward, this committee oversees and presents to the board a slate of candidates for election as well as nominees for the annual awards.

MEMBERSHIP – This group manages the membership directory. We also need to look more closely at our membership structure. We are hoping this group will come up with new and exciting ways to service our members.

FUNDRAISING – We need a strong leader for this group, someone with the time, experience, and contacts to pursue fundraising. We require both operating funds and a long-term endowment. We have struggled with priorities for this committee, such as the rhythm for coordinating our fundraising with that of the university, with budgetary matters including providing/mailling financial statements, and the amount of time the executive director should devote to the task. Two separate committees are conceivable. An expertise in this area would be appreciated but not required.

SYMPOSIUM – These individuals are responsible for presenting a unique, engaging program in Oxford, following board guidelines. This is the longest-standing SFA committee and one of the most time consuming.

PUBLICATIONS – This group will help determine the mission of the newsletter (to generate membership, as a service vehicle, or to simply generate publicity). It also will work closely with the executive director to generate ideas and develop strategies that enhance the SFA's public projects.

The University complies with all applicable laws regarding affirmative action and equal opportunity in all its activities and programs and does not discriminate against anyone by law because of age, creed, color, national origin, race, religion, sex, handicap, veteran, or other status.



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