



## Setting Your Les Dames d'Escoffier International Chapter's Green Table

### A Guide for Connecting Community Food Justice Initiatives and Thriving Food Systems

Since its launch in 2006 as a Les Dames d'Escoffier International (LDEI) farm-to-fork outreach initiative, Green Tables (GT) programming has explored and expanded crucial relationships between LDEI members and the farms and farmers, restaurants and chefs, kitchen tables and home cooks who comprise their local and regional food systems. The form of these efforts has primarily been technical assistance and education, while the audiences have been quite diverse. From consumers at farmers markets to teachers and students at K-12 schools, from culinary students and peer education among Dames about sustainable food sourcing, food waste and much more – Green Tables has had an impact across countless Chapter communities for nearly 15 years.

Come 2020, GT has evolved to encompass how sustainable food production, sourcing and consumption can play into almost every aspect of our industry, from how we source raw ingredients to how we find a use for limp lettuce. Equally important, GT helps define how we as LDEI members can further our philanthropic mission by working to support our local and regional food systems and how they sustain all facets of our individual Chapters' communities.

The topic of sustainable food production, consumption and how they impact our ability to feed the world's population of nine billion people in the face of a changing climate is headline news. The practices that help drive a local and sustainable food system, all of which are central to any GT initiative, are becoming both more mainstream and easier to implement.

The good news for any LDEI Chapter looking to initiate and drive GT programming is that you likely already have many of the necessary pieces in place. Chapters simply need to name it, claim it, and rein it in to create a host of philanthropic GT opportunities.

This handbook, designed to be a living document as Chapter's expand GT's reach, is a guide to how to do just that.

This **Green Tables Handbook** offers the following:

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Every chapter's effort brings us closer to greener tables and a greener world.

Yours in GT proliferation,

**LDEI Green Tables Founder**

Lynn Fredericks (New York)

**LDEI 2020 Green Tables Committee and Handbook Creators**

Drew Faulkner, Chairperson (Washington DC)

Ellen Kanner, Vice Chair (Miami)

Christine Burns Rudalevige (New England)



The initiative was launched at the Annual Meeting in October 2006 and has been embraced by a growing number of members, reflecting the increasing number of LDEI members who are in the business of food production across all the Chapters. Initially many of the Chapters embraced the growing school garden movement and supported local schools. This work continues in some communities, while in others it has been institutionalized through the host school or other community organizations.

As LDEI has expanded to 45 Chapters, it is key that the scope and vision for Green Tables reflect the explosion of awareness and consumer acceptance of the importance of a healthy, local food system.

## Green Tables Revitalized Mission and Vision Statements

### ***Green Tables Mission***

To help members embrace sustainable and equitable agriculture, food sourcing, and culinary practices that drive regenerative food systems accessible to all.

### ***Green Tables Vision***

To inspire members to recognize and adopt Green Tables values and practices at the local and regional level and promote more healthful, equitable and sustainable systems everywhere through programming, initiatives, partnerships and outreach reflecting the unique challenges and opportunities within each Chapter's community.

## Green Tables Objectives

- Build upon existing LDEI local food, gardening and regenerative agriculture efforts.
- Foster a stronger leadership role for LDEI members in regional and national sustainable food movements by sharing our skills for building and maintaining thriving food systems.
- Support local, regional and national food systems that make fresh, nutritious and delicious food accessible to all within our local, regional and national communities.
- Use philanthropic efforts to create educational and economic opportunities for other women in our industry to impact their local, regional and national food systems.

## What does it mean to support GREEN TABLES?

**G**rowing a sustainable food system is a collaborative effort.

**R**esiliency must be built into all food systems as the climate changes.

**E**quity must be evident in food production.

**E**ducation about sustainable food production, sourcing and preparation is key to a thriving food system.

**N**o food waste should be a priority.

**T**he time to act is now.

**A**ccess to food is a basic human right.

**B**ounty must be shared equally across communities.

**L**ocal food can feed the local masses.

**E**cosystems thrive when biodiversity is fostered.

**S**imple solutions work best.

## Why Green Tables Matters More than Ever

The United Nations' [World Food Programme](#) received the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize, in recognition of the importance of the food system in maintaining human health, biodiversity global sustainability, food security, and social justice, all the issues LDEI can address through Green Tables programming.

The word “sustainability” appears in over 818,000,000 websites. The term “food justice” appears in closer to a billion. Industries and end users alike are looking to solve the problems we face throughout our food local, regional, national and international food systems, from climate change to systemic racism. This worldwide momentum toward producing, distributing, preparing and consuming healthy food provides LDEI members with a unique opportunity to be leaders and grow our Green Tables initiative to reach more people, more often. Your Chapter can lead the charge in your community with programming that respects and nurtures diverse agricultural, culinary industry, and community ecosystems. You choose how to express these values based on the needs and interest of your chapter.



2019 LDEI Legacy Award winner Kaley Brammer learns how to shuck a Maine oyster grown by Nonesuch Oysters, a Dame-owned oyster farm

## (Re-)Setting Your Chapter's Green Table

Chances are your green table is already set. Much of your existing LDEI's Chapter programming likely falls within the scope of Green Tables philanthropy. Many times, it's simply a matter of naming it and claiming it as such.

- Does your Chapter, like the Kentucky Chapter, partner with local restaurants and nonprofits to serve a community in need? That's a Green Tables initiative directly addressing food insecurity.
- Do you, like the Nashville Chapter, help maintain a community garden? That serves Green Tables' mission to create a more robust and just local food system.

- Do you, like the New England Chapter, welcome farmers and fisherwomen into your ranks and offer Legacy Award opportunities that show promising young women how your members play a role in the local food system? Then you're well-positioned to provide educational outreach to fellow Dames and schoolchildren alike about the flow of food from the farm and sea to their forks.
- Does your Chapter, like the Des Moines Chapter, offer screenings of food-focused films like, "Just Eat It?" with proceeds benefitting their local food bank? Then you've hosted a Green Tables event geared towards curbing food waste and food insecurity.

The key for your Chapter is to identify programming, provide support and direction, and amplify your success. We encourage Chapters to work with the next generation of chefs, producers, and community leaders. Together, LDEI can help create greener tables for all, and a greener world.

## Brainstorming Green Tables Activities to Benefit Your Community

Here are several questions designed to help chapters target the Green Tables issues and audience that best fits their communities:

**Innovative Food Production:** Farming doesn't necessarily require farmland. Urban, hydroponic, rooftop and vertical gardens help feed people in densely populated areas. What farming innovations are happening in your community? Are any of your members participating in these sustainable farming operations or procuring food from them for their culinary operations?

**Water rights.** Access to clean, fresh water is crucial to life. How does the demand for this precious resource impact your community? What are some of the innovative ways LDEI members are factoring water conservation into their business operations?

**Food access.** [Food apartheid](#) refers to a deliberate attempt to keep communities in need from having easy food access. Who does this affect in your community? How is it being addressed? Do you have members who direct food security, food sovereignty and/or food rescue operations?

**Reducing food waste.** Up to half our food gets wasted in America. What systems exist in your community to address food waste, especially in institutions like restaurants, schools and hospitals?

**Supporting local growers.** Almost three-quarters of the world's population depends on local growers for their food supply, yet [small family farms](#) are in crisis. Community Supported Agriculture or Fisheries subscriptions and shopping at farmers markets are easy ways your members can support the growers in your own community. What can you do as a Chapter?

**Build expertise together.** Are there community land trust organizations, university cooperative land and sea extension services, local authors, and regional film producers who offer resources that address sustainable and equitable food production and access? Working with seasoned organizations such as these to co-produce educational programming can both increase the reach and the frequency of Green Table labeled events.



The Sacramento Chapter hosts an annual farm to fork dinner to as a fundraiser for scholarships it offers and to support the Davis Farm to School program

## Inspiration is Everywhere within LDEI

Individual LDEI Chapters are doing Green Tables work in a variety of formats across the various Chapters and international communities. Get inspired by what they do, reach out to them and brainstorm, and recreate similar efforts fashioned to your Chapter.

### Atlanta

The Atlanta Chapter is well represented on a wide variety of sustainable food and food justice organizations across their city. And its social media presence actively promotes them as leaders on these Green Tables issues.

<https://www.ldeiatlanta.org/>

### Austin

Every Saturday since 2003, the Austin Chapter organizes a Food Run in which members pick up would-be-waste food at a local food cooperative and deliver it to a church soup kitchen to be turned into hot meals for the homeless. The Green Tables program has kept over 80,000 pounds of food from the landfill over the life of the program and helped feed neighbors in need. Since 2015, the Chapter has also supported Posada Esperanza,

a full-service transitional housing program for immigrant mothers and their children escaping domestic or cultural violence. In addition, the Chapter partners with Green Corn Project in creating, digging, and refreshing their vegetable gardens each year.

<https://www.ldeiaustin.org/>



Like many of her fellow Chapter members, British Columbia Dame Barb Finley teaches school children how to access and prepare healthy local foods.

### **British Columbia**

Les Dames d'Escoffier BC supports two Green Tables initiatives, [Growing Chefs!](#) and [Project CHEF](#). These community-based programs teach school children about the importance of fresh, nutritious food with hands-on experience that inspires them to make better food choices throughout their lives.

<https://www.lesdames.ca/>

### **Charleston**

In 2015, the Charleston Chapter came together for a community in crisis, feeding the congregation of Emanuel Church after the terrorist shooting there. This more than meets Green Tables' mission of resilience, providing healing for a devastated community.

<https://ldeicharleston.com/>





The Des Moines Chapter hosted a screening of "Just Eat It" to facilitate a community-wide conversation about food waste.

### **Des Moines**

The Des Moines Chapter has developed Green Tables programming which provides entertainment and education and supports its local food system, too. The Chapter hosts public screenings of documentary films such as "Just Eat It!" and "The Starfish Throwers," with proceeds benefiting their local food pantry.  
<https://www.lesdamesdsm.org/>

### **Kentucky**

Their businesses shuttered by COVID, Kentucky Dames turned to feeding their own community and created [Feed Louisville](#). The nonprofit partners with 14 local restaurants and has a community of hundreds, providing 500 meals a day for the city's houseless.  
<https://www.facebook.com/LesDamesKY/>



Kentucky Dames feeding the hungry in Louisville.

### **Miami**

The Miami Dames have maintained an edible garden section of Miami Beach Botanical Garden, and partner with the garden for the Second Saturday Series in which members teach how to grow and cook with locally-grown produce. The series promotes local farmers and educates the community about sustainable practices. Contact Ellen Kanner, [ellen@soulfulvegan.com](mailto:ellen@soulfulvegan.com)

### **Nashville**

The Nashville Chapter hosts an annual Tour de Farm which includes a day-long VIP farm tour throughout Davidson, Williamson and Rutherford counties and a reception immediately following offering VIP tour guests and the community a feast of locally grown and produced menu items prepared by talented group of Chapter member chefs and friends of Les Dames.

<https://lesdamesnashville.org/>

### **New York**

The New York Chapter has hosted in-person and webinar-style Green Tables programming for LDEI members, dedicated to skill-development in supporting a sustainable food system through members' food businesses. Topics have ranged from producing and procuring sustainable seafood to how the foodservice industry can act to reduce food waste. Recordings of the webinars are available; please refer to the Chapter website.

<http://www.ldny.org/>



A scholarship provided by the Sacramento Chapter gave **Aleksa Davila** the opportunity to finish the California Farm Academy Beginning Farmer Training Program where she learned, among other things, to operate this Kubota tractor.

### **Sacramento**

The Sacramento Chapter has traditionally held a fundraising community dinner called The Village Feast, apportioning the money to nurture diversity across its regional food scene.

In 2019, the chapter distributed \$11,800 in scholarships and honoraria to students at the Center for Land-Based Learning's Farm Academy and the American River College's culinary arts program. The Chapter gave grants to three sommeliers to pay for the certified sommelier exam, to a butcher learning her craft, and to a top graduate of St. John's employment-training program, which trains women to work in a restaurant setting, to be used for housing. This year, the Chapter added an award to allow a cheesemonger to attend an American Cheese Society's conference in Portland.

<https://lesdamessacramento.com/>

### **Washington DC**

During the COVID crisis, the DC chapter generated online programming, addressing topics that included how the pandemic has impacted the food distribution chain. This webinar, open to the public, meets the Green Tables mission to promote a more sustainable food system.

<https://www.lesdamesdc.org/>

## Glossary of Green Tables Terms

New terms describing our ever-changing food systems crop up regularly.

### **Biodiversity**

As Chapters and as individuals, we support the rich variety of plant, animal and micro-organism life necessary for a thriving ecosystem. Bees and other pollinators are responsible for up to a third of our food supply. Growing healthy food depends on healthy, fertile soil. However, monocropping, overcropping, systemic livestock breeding, genetic modification and overfishing have resulted in drastic species loss. Up to 70% of our marine life has been overfished. The 7,000 varieties of apples grown a century ago are now less than 1,000. We support practices such as regenerative and organic agriculture, carbon sequestration, growing heirloom crops and other measures making our food system more productive and our planet more resilient in the face of climate change.

### **Environmental Sustainability**

As Chapters and as individuals, we support environmental practices such as regenerative agriculture, intercropping, and carbon sequestration which yield healing and bountiful food while protecting and replenishing our planet. We support a food system that produces food accessible to all without compromising human and environmental health, and support initiatives such as community sponsored agriculture programs that help close the gaps between grower and consumer, resulting in lower carbon output, less food waste and shorter distribution chains even as they provide fresh local food to communities and increase social capital.

### **Equity**

Blacks, Latinex, women and immigrants make up the majority of foodservice employees, many receiving wages below the federal poverty level, yet they are underrepresented in decision-making. We recognize that we must raise the conditions in which many people who raise and process our food toil so that they are treated fairly. As Chapters and as individuals, we support equity and inclusivity for systematic fair treatment of people of all racial groups, ethnicity, gender orientation, size, appearance and other categorization, resulting in fair and impartial opportunities and outcomes for all.

### **Food Justice**

Up to 40 million Americans experienced food insecurity in 2019. Then came the pandemic and growing unemployment, pushing poverty and hunger rates to 54 million Americans, affecting people in every sector, and one child in five. However, Black and Latinex communities have been twice as likely as whites to experience food insecurity, with higher rates of diabetes, heart disease and obesity, resulting from lack of access to healthy food. This reflects a historic, systemic bias in the food system that includes slavery, forced migration and discrimination. We support an inclusive food system that reflects and feeds diversity, providing fresh, appropriate food that's accessible and available to all within our communities.

## **Food Waste**

Americans waste almost half of the food we buy. That comes to 400 pounds of food per person per year. Some is lost in the field, much more is lost in distribution and processing, and even more in industry, institutions and homes. What's wasted isn't just what's uneaten, also wasted are the resources used to produce it, the land, water, energy, labor, and expense. As chapters and individuals, we advocate using and preserving the food we have, using methods like fermenting and canning seasonal produce. We support closing the gaps in the food distribution chain with recycling and composting programs, and partnering with local organizations and community kitchens to rescue food to feed those in need.

## **Regeneration**

Regeneration goes beyond sustainability, aiming to help heal and improve the earth through restorative agricultural and land management practices from community composting to carbon sequestration initiatives. Regenerative practices contribute to improving soil health and supporting biodiversity. The result is more food for all and enhanced resilience for the planet and all species on it.

## Outside Resources

Here is an ever-growing list of resources about sustainable food production and food justice initiatives.

### Localized

- The wealth of talent and expertise of your own members
- [extension agents](#) culinary, agricultural, land preservation and food insecurity organizations
- [Sea Grant operations](#)

### Regional

- Edible Magazines
- [Food Rescue US](#)
- Food Solutions of New England
- Restaurant Opportunities Centers United
- State-focused organic and sustainable agriculture organizations -- MOFGA and PASA
- Southern Foodways Alliance

### National

- Barilla Center for Food and Nutrition
- Civil Eats
- Environmental Defense Fund
- Environmental Working Group
- Food and Agriculture Organization/United Nations
- [Foodprint](#)
- [FoodTank](#)
- [National Resource Defense Council](#)
- [National Young Farmers Coalition](#)
- Project Drawdown
- Rapid Transition
- ReFED
- Slow Food
- Soul Fire Farm
- Union of Concerned Scientists
- [Women Food & Ag Network](#)