



Les Dames d'Escoffier | Austin Chapter

Celebrating Women of Culinary Achievement and Creating Paths for Those to Come

FOR SECOND YEAR IN A ROW, LES DAMES D'ESCOFFIER OF AUSTIN AWARDS \$20,000 IN SCHOLARSHIPS, STIPENDS & GRANTS

AUSTIN, TX, (May 20, 2020) – The Austin chapter of [Les Dames d'Escoffier](#), an international culinary leadership organization of women, has awarded \$20,000 in scholarships, professional development stipends and grants supporting Central Texas women and organizations. This is the second year in a row that the organization has awarded \$20,000 in educational scholarships and stipends, important now more than ever given the setbacks to the hospitality industry from the coronavirus pandemic.

“We had a record number of very talented and deserving applicants this winter, all working to advance their knowledge and expertise in their respective culinary fields,” says Stephanie Piland, scholarship chair for Les Dames’ Austin chapter. “We were thinking about the upheaval and uncertainty the hospitality industry has faced over the past several months, and in light of that, awarding \$20,000 in educational scholarships and stipends at this moment felt like the ultimate act of optimism for our industry and our peers. These very talented women are Austin’s present and future, and now, more than ever, Les Dames feels called to support their significant contributions to our city.”

This year’s [scholarship recipients](#) include:

- Krista Church, wine director at Eberly, receiving a \$4,000 travel stipend to travel to the Wachau wine region of Austria to learn about its sustainable winemaking practices.
- Juanda Powell, a student at Austin Community College, receiving a \$4,000 culinary school scholarship to pursue her applied science degree in baking and pastry and culinary arts.
- Hope Green, owner of Emojis Grilled Cheese Bar, receiving a \$2,000 educator stipend to attend CHART’s hospitality training conference and E Simplified’s entrepreneurial coaching program and to gain accreditation as a Certified Life Skills Instructor.
- Sara Mardanbigi, co-owner of Nixta Taqueria, receiving a \$2,000 business owner stipend to pursue sommelier certifications that will help her build a beverage program for the restaurant.
- Valerie Fontana, founder and chief curator of the Museum of Tea USA, receiving a \$2,000 ‘a la carte’ stipend to attend the World Tea Expo for the first time and attend two all-day tea and tea business workshops as well as other specialized tea trainings.

- Carrie Matherly, server at Lenoir, receiving a \$2,000 beverage professional stipend for her recent Level 1 certification through the Court of Master Sommeliers and to pursue her Level 2 Certified Sommelier certification.
- Margaret Thorenson, area manager of Con Olio, receiving a \$2,000 travel stipend to attend the University of California-Davis Sensory Evaluation of Olive Oil Certification program.
- Jules Stoddard, pastry chef at Olamaie, receiving a \$2,000 travel stipend to travel through the South to gather information about Southern food and culture.

In addition, two honorable mentions were awarded:

- De Juana Lozada, founder and chief visionary of Soul Popped Gourmet Popcorn
- Veronica Meewes, freelance writer and bartender at APT 115 wine bar

To date, the Austin chapter has awarded more than \$120,000 in scholarships, continuing education stipends and community grants.

In addition to providing scholarships, the Austin Chapter of Les Dames d'Escoffier hosts education, mentoring and networking [events](#) for both members and non-members, supports local [philanthropic initiatives](#) such as its annual holiday dinner for the homeless, and provides weekly "food runs" to reduce food waste in the community.

For more information about the Austin chapter of Les Dames d'Escoffier, go to <http://Ideiaustin.org/>. Follow us on [Facebook](#) (Ideiaustin) and Instagram (@austindames).