

CULTURES, CAREERS REFLECT A NEW LEADERSHIP TEAM FOR WOMEN'S FOOD ALLIANCE

story by LEIGH CORT

The Women's Food Alliance is maneuvering through the tides of change as they navigate the hospitality landscape of 2025 with the diversity of careers and cultures!

Celebrating its 12th anniversary, WFA nurtures and supports their members as they grow and work toward success yet to come. The future in hospitality reveals promising trends. The WFA is expanding its leadership team to stand together through enduring challenges as a "sorority" of business leaders.

The hospitality industry offers a vibrant and colorful career path today.

Guiding this path can also come with challenges. Led by founder Leigh Cort, the Women's Food Alliance is, and has been since 2013, dedicated to empowering their members and providing them with connections, opportunities and tools needed to advance.

Continuous learning and networking are essential. Through the members' eyes and experiences, building a strong caring network opens doors to new ideas, industry knowledge and gathering support from peers. Simply engaging with industry associates, attending meetings and events — plus participating (showing up) expands those connections. Sharing trends, technologies and customer feedback is crucial to staying

ahead with an open mind.

Through the years, Women's Food Alliance members have become trusted mentors, which plays a pivotal role in career growth. Mentors understand many obstacles; fostering a supportive organization is vital to thriving and achievement.

Meet the Womens Food Alliance Leadership Team:



Sue Lomba

Sue Lomba is a true Jersey girl with her roots as a native New Yorker, too. Honing her expertise in corporate meeting and event management, she knows how to navigate the international corporate culture with a strong focus on collaboration and communication, which allows her to play a crucial role of vice president of the Women's Food Alliance. She's dedicated to supporting leadership teams in achieving their strategic objectives.

Sue is currently the executive assistance to the V.P. of research & development, contact lens platform at Johnson & Johnson, MedTech Vision, where she organizes team-building events, hosts town halls and facilitates activities for the executive leadership team.

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Isela Gonzelez

Isela Gonzelez enjoys a rich heritage of family traditions from Cuba — the flavors and values that were brought to the U.S.A. and preserved across generations. Emigrating from Cuba meant leaving behind familiar settings but carrying forward cultural treasures, especially in food. Cuban cuisine is a blend of Spanish, African and Caribbean influences, which creates a vibrant culinary identity. Isela's restaurant in St. Augustine Beach, Paladar Cuban Eatery, shares the authentic flavors symbolizing cultural pride and resilience. Her abuela passed down culinary skills to Isela, ensuring that a piece of Cuba always lived with her family. Today, Isela connects with clients by offering them an authentic taste of Cuban hospitality.



Cindy Stavelly

Cindy Stavelly grew up in Springfield, Pennsylvania, recalling her large family and especially her grandmother (Mimi Mumper) who loved to cook. Pennsylvania Dutch dishes have lingered in Cindy's memory, notably launching her own coffee-and-donut business at 13! Her Pennsylvania heritage includes favorites like pot pie, shoo fly pie, chicken corn soup — while respecting "Less is more, enjoy the moments." Cindy's brilliant career

of 30-plus years in hospitality reflects management talents and genuine caring about her team; today, Cindy is executive director of St. Augustine's Pirate & Treasure Museum and the Colonial Quarter — and statewide hospitality organizations in leadership positions.



Marie Milton

Marie Milton is a second-generation woman whose parents emanated from South Korea and Guam. Born in Louisiana, brought up on a military base in central Texas, Marie lived everywhere from Alaska, Guam, Korea and across the U.S.A. Her hard-working parents raised her in the Korean culture, believing in the American dream for their children of college educations. Marie's children also enjoyed a close relationship with their Korean grandmother and her home still respects the same cultural practices integrated with her appreciation for American life, too. Marie's entrepreneurial spirit now finds her owning one of the most distinctive properties in St. Augustine — Three Stories Inn. It's a hallmark experience focusing on elegance and refinement, setting the stage for guests to create their own story.

Ellie Rose Schultze grew up in St. Augustine, where, at 14, she worked her way through nearly every position in restaurants from clearing tables to head chef. She's an avid traveler who has traveled to 50-plus countries, taking cook-

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Coastal Pool Home in Ponte Vedra Beach



26 Maria Place, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082
4 Bedrooms | 4 Bathrooms | 4,979 sq. ft. | \$4,200,000

Step inside 26 Maria Place and experience a one story coastal traditional pool home which is simply stunning! Located in coveted Old Ponte Vedra Beach, 26 Maria Place lies in the perfect location within walking distance to the Ponte Vedra Inn & Club and the Lodge. With almost 5,000 square feet of spacious living, 26 Maria Place also includes outdoor living with three outdoor patios, with a pool a pergola and lagoon. This exceptional home blends coastal living with a warm and welcoming family enclave. This coastal home can accommodate a large family with space to entertain their friends that includes 4 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms a large living room den, sunroom, family room and updated kitchen with designer appliances. The beautiful dining room is ideally located overlooking the pool on one side and off the chef's kitchen at the other end offering the ultimate dining venue. Ponte Vedra Beach is just minutes to the famed TPC, Atlantic Ocean and renowned Mayo Clinic.



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Ellie Rose Schultze

ing classes in Mexico, Thailand, Cambodia, China and more! Eventually landing in New York City, she attended culinary school, learning the ropes in fast-paced award-winning kitchens before returning to St. Augustine. Her goal? Opening her own restaurant. Jumping into the community as a private chef, caterer and now executive chef at Chez L'Amour (jazz bar, event space, eclectic dining destination), Ellie has won several awards, recognized for her outstanding culinary style. Her international love affair with food, each menu reflects world cuisines — always pushing boundaries and bringing something new to the Old City!



Monica Anderson

Monica Anderson brings her classic Southern background of legendary family recipes to the Women's Food Alliance from her large Jacksonville family, inspired by multiple generations of timeless cooking. Her mother grew up with encouragement from her mother; she started baking as the original oatmeal nut cookies because she wanted to replicate the cookies she had in grade school. Family flavors and techniques have been lovingly passed down, paired

with newer approaches to the classic beloved desserts that are created at her family's business, Arble Baking Company. Aunt Clara was a force of sass and humor who encouraged the famous sweet potato pie that always feels like family is in the house. Along with her hard-working parents and expanded family, Monica (now co-owner) is taking the family's business to the next level of contemporary Southern food. Surprises are coming in 2025.



Cindy Campbell-Taylor

Cindy Campbell-Taylor grew up in a bustling Midwest household with her mom as one of 13 children, and her parents raised seven children of their own. Meals were more than an opportunity to eat — they were events! Growing up in southern Illinois, with so many mouths to feed, Cindy and siblings took on the roles of sous chefs and cleanup crew, working side-by-side to pull off a "private catering" every night. Cindy's philosophy is "The land, the people and the culture" of America. Teamwork, creativity and joy that comes from sharing a well-prepared meal with those you love is her mantra. Merging love for food with a passion for storytelling during high impact years with the Walt Disney Company, branding and marketing is how Cindy creates extraordinary experiences for clients through Taylor-Made Solutions — helping clients find their unique voice through engagement.

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A Portrait of Potential

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Erin Kelly

Erin Kelly was raised in Southern California with some of the best culinary ingredients at her fingertips; but as a child she was quite the picky eater. Her Czechoslovakian, Danish, German and Irish heritage combined for a rich legacy of marvelous cooks, many owning restaurants and a bakery. Erin had no idea how fortunate she was growing up in orange and avocado groves, learning how to appreciate the presentation and sharing beautiful food made with love.

With a successful and lengthy career in the airline industry, Erin is now the energy behind special events at Kelly Farm in St. Augustine. She's an A+ networker, keeping up with hospitality / event trends — especially in the wedding industry. Erin develops new business at Kelly Farm from iconic special events like the St. Augustine Symphony to introducing new cuisines and event themes that inspire her creativity!



Nancy Slatsky

Nancy Slatsky is known far and wide for her outgoing, detail-driven personality in the food industry. A graduate of the California Culinary Academy in San Francisco, she became executive pastry chef at the Stanford Court Hotel. Nancy spent the following four years at The Grand

Hotel in Big Timber, Montana, as sous chef. Her heart was in pastry when her career blossomed at the Ponte Vedra Lodge & Club as pastry chef, followed by One Ocean Resort in Atlantic Beach. Knowledgeable about and influential in culinary sales, she serviced top hotels, restaurants and private club chefs when she became consultant and sales rep for Swiss Chalet Fine Foods. With her expansive ability of developing recipes and menus, Nancy's finely tuned sales abilities now find her as regional sales/consultant for Mr. Greens Produce, handling customer sales and satisfaction to a tee!



Chelsy Johnson

Chelsy Johnson grew up in Iowa, surrounded by lush agriculture and farm-to-table cuisine culture. In early years, she gained valuable experience working at iconic local restaurants such as B'Bops, Chuck E. Cheese, Maid-Rite, Godfather's Pizza and more. There, she learned the fundamentals of food service and high-volume sales. Moving to New York City, Chelsy dove into its vibrant food scene working in high-end Michelin-starred restaurants before exploring the diverse culinary cultures of Bermuda, Ireland, Belize, Mexico and onward. Chelsy's recent career includes managing operations as the G.M. for two renowned restaurants — River & Fort and Pesca Vilano. Always committed to an evolving culinary journey, Chelsy stays updated about the latest restaurant openings, food trends and industry news — especially as she opens the door to St. Augustine's new magazine, "Loving Our Town."



Kelly Mabry

Kelly Mabry, a Jacksonville girl, grew up with 10 siblings. Her childhood was filled with incredible grandmothers — Josephine from Arizona, a Mexican Pueblo Indian, and Isabel from Germany who owned a small café where she made country German dishes. Kelly was taught Spanish from Josephine and how to cook fusion dishes, making guava jelly, tortillas and sopapillas from scratch. Long summers were spent in Isabel's kitchen recalling stock pots of stew, corn chowder and drop dumplings. The community of Fruit Cove was a favorite part of Kelly's life and the closeness she developed with her enormous family. The restaurant business lured Kelly, owning her own cafes and then three Tropical Smoothie Cafés with her husband Jim. Her passion has always been to hire and train hundreds of young adults over many years, while maintaining a healthy lifestyle and caring about the well-being of children and all of the people she loves!



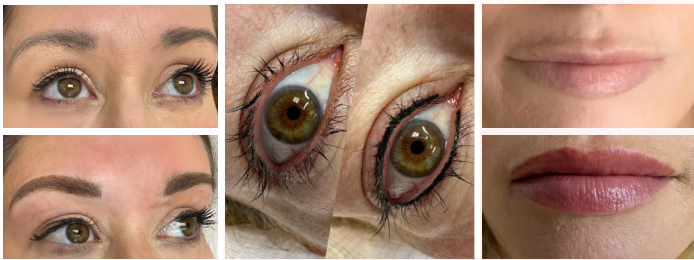
Leigh Cort

Leigh Cort, founder and president of the Women's Food Alliance, honors her 40-year career in the hospitality industry that began in New York as the party director at the Trump Tower. She views the journey that was punctuated with years at Sardi's in NYC's theater district and the Ritz-Carlton, Amelia Island, Florida, as her legacy to women in hospitality. Her members come together to advance their education, collaborate, mentor and enjoy the relationships that grow and flourish through the organization that is true to its mission of "Friendship First"!

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