

dishing with

How this Southern blog star, SHAWANDA MASON, is forging her own path



Born and raised in Virginia, Shawanda Mason of the *Eat.Drink.Frolic.* blog began her journey in the culinary world like many others do, by experimenting with new things and discovering a love for them. With limited previous experience in the kitchen, she began teaching herself new techniques and creating unique recipes that began to set her apart. Now, she's the creator and co-founder of several organizations pushing for the support and education of those in and around her current home in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The Chatterry (a nonprofit organization offering classes on topics ranging from cocktails and calligraphy to mastering Microsoft Excel and financial planning) and The Brunch Collective (a quarterly brunch series featuring creative female entrepreneurs) are just two examples. We wanted to know how she does it all, and this is what she had to say.

Was food always a passion of yours? It was a part of me that I honestly didn't discover until after college. Until then, I just cooked to survive, and I didn't experiment with things. But once I moved away and started making friends who were in the restaurant industry, I started exploring a bit more and got more comfortable in the kitchen. It seemed like it happened overnight. I started loving trying recipes with different ingredients and learning the food science of things.

How do you balance time and energy between all of your endeavors? There are not enough hours in the day, and because I am truly passionate about every single project I am involved in or create, I want to work on them all the time. For me, I've realized that balance does not exist. Instead, I have to prioritize. It's obviously exciting to come up with all of these ideas and see them through, but it can be difficult to maintain. Now I take things one day at a time.

What do you hope to achieve with these projects? My overarching goal is to be a connector for people. I think the one thing that everything I do has in common is that we're connecting people with something. At The Chatterry, we're connecting people to hobbies they're passionate about and opportunities to further their careers. With *Eat.Drink.Frolic.*, I'm connecting people with easy recipes or cocktail ideas. If I write a travel piece, I'm connecting people with a place. I want to focus on continuing all of that and building my community even further to become that connection for even more people.

What are you cooking this New Year? I have started cooking collard greens outside of the holidays. I used to only eat them during the holiday season, but now I crave them into the New Year. On my blog, there's a recipe for Olive Oil Braised Collard Greens, and they're spectacular. So, the holidays kick-start my hunger for them, but I'm keeping it going through the New Year and maybe even into the spring.

Keep up with Shawanda's journey in and out of the kitchen by visiting eatdrinkfrolic.com.



New Orleans-Style Cafe Au Lait

There may be nothing so classically New Orleans as the combination of coffee and chicory. This legendary pair has a robust tradition with a heritage as unique as its flavor. Mixed with hot milk, it serves as the perfect start to any day. **MAKES ONE CUP**

- ½ cup milk
- ½ cup freshly brewed French Market® Coffee & Chicory
- Sugar to taste (optional)

In a small saucepan, heat milk over low heat, stirring frequently, until small bubbles form around edge. Fill a coffee cup halfway with hot coffee and halfway with hot milk. Stir in sugar, if desired.



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frenchmarketcoffee.com



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tastes & tools

Check out these New Year's essentials

1 CAROLINE'S CAKES 4-LAYER COCONUT CLOUD CAKE

Caroline's Cakes has been around for decades and has gathered a following of loyal fans. Their flagship product, the 7-Layer Caramel Cake, is one of our favorites, but this 4-layer Coconut Cloud Cake is another one of our must-haves, especially this time of year. Each layer is lighter than air, and the fresh coconut filling can't be beat. Have you ordered yours? \$60; carolinescakes.com



2 HONEY CHILD JELLIES JELLY TRIO

Winter jams and jellies have some of the most delectable flavors, and this sampling from Honey Child Jellies is no exception. Each batch is carefully crafted with no added artificial sugars. The sweetness you'll taste is from their locally sourced fruits and pure wildflower honeys. The Smoked Strawberry is our go-to, but you're sure to find other unique combinations you'll love. \$28; honeychildjellies.com

This pan is a beautiful blend of early American design and modern functionality with performance rivaling traditional cast-iron skillets.

3 SMITHEY IRONWARE CO. CARBON STEEL FARMHOUSE SKILLET

When it comes to quality cookware, Smithey is at the top of our list, and their cast-iron pans are always within reach in our kitchens. Now they've done it again with this new carbon-steel skillet. Hand-forged in South Carolina, each piece has a unique appearance, and its lightweight design rivals other traditional cookware. Order yours today and elevate your cooking experience this year. \$275; smithey.com



4 STONEWARE & CO. MUG

Each of this Louisville, Kentucky, company's mugs is handcrafted with both functionality and durability in mind. The handle, for instance, is molded separately from the rest of the cup to ensure it never gets too warm or too cool. We think it's the perfect vessel to hold hot cocoa or cider, and they've got plenty of fun color options to choose from. \$27; stonewareandco.com



Spicy New Look

same great flavor

Down in Ville Platte, Louisiana, we know that variety is the spice of life. Now, after decades with our original look, we're excited to finally share our all-new packaging: a bold step to bring Slap Ya Mama into the future and keep our spicy spirit alive — all while delivering that original slappin' flavor you know and love.

SLAP YA MAMA

Discover the new face of Slap Ya Mama at **SPICYNEWLOOK**

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new + noteworthy

Explore these buzzworthy spots this New Year*

HELEN | Birmingham, Alabama

This contemporary Southern grill opened its doors with executive chef and co-owner Rob McDaniel at the helm. An Alabama native, he grew up with a love for food instilled in him and eventually decided to pursue a career in the kitchen. He and his wife, Emily, decided to open Helen to show off their passion for the region's cuisine through menu items like juicy pork chops and grilled scampi. Just make sure you save room for dessert. helenbham.com



PIZZA JEANS

Atlanta, Georgia

Recently opened in the historic Ponce City Market in Atlanta, Pizza Jeans is the product of successful pizza pop-ups by the owners of Root Baking Co. The pizzeria features red- and white-sauce pies with customizable topping options as well as a selection of take-and-bake meals like baked ziti and lasagna. And while the pizzeria took over most of the bakery's operational space, Root Baking Co. fans can still get their fill at the counter. pizzajeans.com

REDFISH BY CHEF ADRIANNE

Miami, Florida

Finally back in business after being devastated by Hurricane Irma three years ago, the iconic Redfish Grill may have a slightly new name, but seafood is still the name of the game. The popular, historic restaurant now boasts a spacious outdoor seating area surrounded by waterfront views, while the brunch, lunch, and dinner menus feature classic seafood house staples like jumbo crab cakes and oysters Rockefeller. You can't go wrong here. Just let Chef Adrienne take care of you. redfishmiami.com

*Openings and events reported as of the time this issue went to press.

Celebrating the 75th Anniversary of Brennan's



BRENNAN'S | New Orleans, Louisiana

Brennan's, best known for its creation of Bananas Foster, continues to be one of the restaurants playing a significant role in how New Orleans cuisine is defined today. As it celebrates 75 years of service, there is much more to this legend than just its striking, historic façade. Owen Brennan, with his brothers and sisters, opened the original location in 1946. Little did they know then how it would become one of the world's finest restaurants steeped in traditional French and Creole fare. Later on, the family conceived the idea of Breakfast at Brennan's, catapulting them into regional prominence. Up to that point, breakfast or brunch at fine-dining restaurants was unheard of. Ralph Brennan, a third-generation scion of the family and current co-owner, got his start at the iconic French Quarter establishment that bears his name. He and his team spared no effort or expense when renovating the fabled building at 417 Royal Street. And it's no wonder why—Brennan's is a crown jewel in the Crescent City's culinary sphere. brennansneworleans.com

Southern Tastemakers We Love



TAMARA ECKLES
Atlanta, Georgia

If you've got an insatiable sweet tooth, you need to know Atlanta-based Tamara Eckles. An avid baker and lover of all baked goods, Tamara's original plan was to open a bakery with the same name, letting the *Jem of the South* blog act as a way to generate buzz for the business. That plan may have changed a bit, but her blog and confections alone have taken her places she never dreamed over the last 10 years. Soon, she'll self-publish a cookbook titled *Let's Have Brunch* and continue her mission to encourage people to slow down and enjoy making something with someone they love.

FIND TAMARA ECKLES'S TASTE OF THE SOUTH RECIPES AT jemofthesouth.com AND FOLLOW HER ON INSTAGRAM @jemofthesouth. AS SEEN IN - TASTE OF THE SOUTH © HOFFMAN MEDIA 2021