



Portrait by Chase Kamata

To Dooky & Leah
With Love



Photo by Bryan S. Berteaux courtesy of The Times-Picayune

Passion, Love & Faith

*“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said,
people will forget what you did,
but people will never forget how you made them feel.”*

– Maya Angelou

Families connect as they gather around the dinner table. For over seventy years, the Chase family has provided a community table around which issues of civil rights, politics, art, music and the Creole culture are debated and shared. Change is inspired between spoonfuls of gumbo. Faith and tradition seep into social consciousness like butter onto a warm sweet potato biscuit.

Passionately, lovingly and faithfully, both individually and together, Edgar L. “Dooky” Chase Jr. and Leah Lange Chase have worked to uplift their community – living their lives by example. Dooky Chase’s Restaurant has become the cornerstone in a legacy of philanthropic, social justice and civic activity as well as a springboard for the creative and culinary arts. Dooky and Leah, themselves, are catalysts for inclusion, social change and a progressive movement for the people, the city and the state that they love.



*Dooky and Leah’s children (left to right):
Leah, Emily, Edgar Chase III and Stella*

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Family

When I think of mother and dad, I know that there are at least two people out there in the world who will NEVER abandon me - Edgar Chase Jr. and Leah Lange Chase. Never is a strong word. So, one should always be careful whenever the word is used. But, here I do mean "never."



Leah, Dooky III, Leah, Dooky Jr., and Stella

When a person goes through life knowing that someone is always there for you, someone out there who truly loves you, a feeling of confidence happens. You feel happy, confident, and free to take on the world. Free to enjoy life and just be yourself.

- Edgar L. "Dooky" Chase III, Son



Dooky Jr., Dooky's sister Doris, James Holtry, Mayor "Chep" Morrison, and Dooky Jr.'s mother, Emily

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I will always remember the first time that I met Leah Chase almost 25 years ago. She walked through the door of the Hermann Grima House where they were having a conference on Creole foodways. My mother was with me and we took one look at Mrs. Chase and decided she looked like family. My first words to her were, "you look like family. May I call you 'Aunt' Leah?" She acquiesced with her usual generosity and has been my "Aunt" Leah ever since.

Over the years, she's given me a nickname - Dr. Smart Mouth, bonded with my mother, and when my mother died in 2000, Aunt Leah told me she'd "decided to take me on."



In the course of our friendship, I've been the beneficiary of her extraordinary generosity, the recipient of her incredible wisdom, and occasionally the brunt of her wicked sense of humor. I adore the way she loves to entertain, hosting old and new friends at Dooky Chase where she has never met a stranger, I love her fierce sense of mission about preserving the art and artistic legacy of her city, and most of all I admire her determination to document, celebrate, and maintain the high standards of Creole cooking in New Orleans.

- Jessica Harris, Ph.D.

Jessica Harris and Leah

In 1941 Edgar L. "Dooky" Sr. and his wife Emily Tennette Chase opened a small sandwich shop and lottery ticket outlet. It was not long before the small enterprise, one of the few commercial meeting places for African Americans in New Orleans, expanded into the existing Dooky Chase's Restaurant at 2301 Orleans Avenue.

Edgar L. "Dooky" Chase Jr. and Leah Lange met during the 1945 Mardi Gras Season at a carnival ball held at the Labor Union Hall on the corner of Bienville and Front Streets. Dooky's band, The Dooky Chase Orchestra, was the featured performance for the ball. Leah, attired in a black strapless dress with an orchid pinned on her shoulder, was enjoying the night with a group of friends when she caught Dooky's eye.

One could say that it was love at first sight or destiny, but once Dooky noticed Leah, he knew that he had to dance with her.

Dooky directed his orchestra to play a number that would get the crowd up on their feet. It was a number that he was sure no one would turn down an opportunity to Jitterbug to. He whispered to one of his band members, "Keep playing," as he suavely walked over to Leah and asked her to dance.

Dooky and Leah married in 1946 and after their four children were of school age she joined her husband and his parents in the family business. Leah added her personal flair to the restaurant's ambience and the menu, which respects the high standards and cultural traditions of Creole cooking in New Orleans.

The combination proved to be a winner. Dooky Chase's is an iconic New Orleans "community" restaurant, and Dooky and Leah are still dancing sixty-six years later, not to the "Jitterbug," but to the "Blue Danube Waltz."



Leah and Dooky on a date



The extended Chase Family



Edgar L. Chase, Sr.



Emily Tennette Chase



The Lange Siblings

In the words of Jimmy Dorsey & Paul Madeira:

In this world of ordinary people, extraordinary people, I'm glad there is you.
In this world of overrated pleasures and underrated treasures, I'm glad there is you.

In the words of Diane Warren:

You were my strength when I was weak. You were my voice when I couldn't speak.
You were my eyes when I couldn't see. You saw the best there was in me.
Lifted me up when I couldn't reach. You gave me faith 'cause you believed.
I'm everything I am because you loved me.

In the words of Stevie Wonder:

You are the sunshine of my life. That's why I'll always stay around.
You are the apple of my eye. Forever you'll stay in my heart.

In my own words:

THANK YOU!!!!!!!

- Leah Chase-Kamata, Daughter

If there is anybody who can get me teary-eyed (and vice versa) that person would be Edgar "Mister Dooky" Chase, my late father's friend since their childhood. All we have to do is run into each other and inevitably we talk about both of us missing my dad. My grandmother raised my dad in the Lafitte Housing Development across the street from the restaurant, so it was inevitable that Dooky Chase Jr. and Warren Bell, Sr. would be friends. That friendship was cemented when they began playing music together in their teens and started their own band - often rehearsing in my grandmother's kitchen - and it has lasted a lifetime.

I vividly remember whenever my daddy wanted to treat Mom to a special Friday evening, that always meant a trip to Dooky Chase for one of Miss Leah's fabulous stuffed shrimp dinner plates. Momma, a great cook herself, says to this day that "nobody ever made those stuffed shrimp like Leah."

I remember as a young Black journalist in the 70's and 80's, being brought together with my fellow Black journalists in the "main dining room" - before the restaurant expanded - by those opinion leaders who wanted to make sure that we as gatekeepers understood how the stories that we covered impacted the underserved minority community. And isn't it wonderful that, even today with so many restaurant options for us to consider, that the same memory-filled location on Orleans Avenue is still a perennially popular place for the city's movers and shakers (Black and White, these days) to gather over lunch to discuss a business deal or a political campaign?

I have come to realize that Dooky Chase and his amazing wife Leah have been vital to our community's history for over sixty years. Thank you for years of family friendship, for your service to the New Orleans community, and for being the warm and wonderful human beings that you are!

- Warren Bell, Jr., Consultant and Former Journalist

Warren Bell, Sr.



Community & Civic Life

The Chases have steadfastly served as pioneers and advocates for civil equality and inclusion. Dooky and Leah had to fight for a seat at the table for themselves, their family and friends, and people of color. During the Civil Rights movement, they willingly gave of themselves and their family's business to support progressive and successful social justice causes, movements and conversations of inclusion. Dooky was a trumpeter for voter registration and bravely encouraged many to register to vote, even after his family's business was hit with a Molotov cocktail bomb. He was never afraid to reach out across the barriers of race and class to seek others to join in the fight.

Dooky Chase's provided a safe place to meet and discuss strategies for the Civil Rights movement.



Iconic civil rights leaders such as Oretha Castle Haley, A.P. Tureaud, Ernest N. "Dutch" Morial, The Reverend Andrew Young, Revius Ortique, Thurgood Marshall and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. all gathered to have pivotal discussions over a bowl of gumbo within the safety of the walls of the upstairs dining room.

The early days of the restaurant – 1940s interior (Edgar Chase, Sr. seated with his back to the wall)

From Leah Chase: *Listen, I Say Like This* by Carol Allen, © 2002 by Carol Allen used by permission of the publisher, Pelican Publishing Company, Inc. www.pelicanpub.com

The Chases' passion for equality and community involvement is as strong today as it was in the days of segregation. Through their support of many events, organizations and causes, Dooky and Leah are sure to leave a lasting impression on the people of New Orleans, the country and the world.

Leah signs autographs for young fans at the Southern Food and Beverage Museum.



The night I graduated from Loyola University Law Center, I went to Dooky Chase with my wife, my parents, my brother and his wife. Across the room was the only other African American in my law school class, Nils. I'm not sure where my White classmates were celebrating that night. But I know that Nils and I, like most Black people here in the 1950's, viewed Dooky Chase as the place to go for major celebratory occasions. Unlike so many of the places we went to in those days - Hays Chicken Shack, the Million Dollar Room, the Robin Hood, the Dew Drop Inn - Dooky Chase is still alive and well. It's an institution.

- Lolis Elie, Sr., Attorney

Not doing for others was never an option. I was always given tasks to do; going to the grocery for a neighbor, taking care of sick and elderly relatives and friends - not one day went by without doing something for somebody. My father assisted with voter registration, going door to door. He offered the restaurant as a meeting place. His love for music led him to the Jazz and Heritage Festival, serving on the first board. My mother put her energy into the Ebony Fashion Fare to raise money for African-Americans to receive quality healthcare at Flint-Goodridge Hospital. She also

served on many other committees, boards and service organizations such as The Links and NOMA.

Today, I am still witnessing my parents praying, working hard, and doing for others. I am trying to emulate them in my life. I always remind my children to pray, work hard, do for others, and leave the rest to God.

- Stella Chase Reese, Daughter

As a child growing up in the forties and fifties, there was one distinguished landmark, an institution in the Black community that everyone aspired to experience during their lifetime. That institution was Dooky Chase Restaurant. It was culinary nutritional food for the body, a cerebral laboratory for the mind and an incubator of Black cultural growth and development.

As a young man, I would stand on the corner of Orleans and N. Miro Streets just to watch the visiting famous Black entertainers, movie stars, Civil Rights activists, renowned educators, physicians and professional athletes entering or leaving Dooky Chase.

For over 58 years, my wife, Gloria, and I have had the privilege of the Dooky Chase Experience. Each time I received a promotion, Gloria and I would celebrate there. Leah and Dooky always came out with one of their special desserts and asked the customers to join them in a Toast to the Porees. For our 50th anniversary, you know who prepared the food - Leah Chase.

When you experience Dooky Chase, you enjoy the best of food, the elegant ambience, personable hospitality and the cultural and spiritual vibrations of the African-American Artists' works that hang on the restaurant walls. Dooky Chase is a New Orleans Institution of African American Culture.

- Edgar F. Poree, Jr., Retired, Regional Director of Business Development, BellSouth Telecommunications Inc.

How does one describe the contributions of Leah Chase, when over a lifetime of simply being Leah, she has contributed so much? It is easy to remember a specific act, but difficult to encapsulate a lifetime of simply being Leah: open, honest, courageous, balanced, creative, always positive, intelligent, generous and warm, an inspiration, a leader, an advisor, a hostess and entrepreneur, a chef and cook, while always remaining a wife, mother and grandmother. She is always there when she is needed. There is no end to the list! All of us, the City, State and Country owe thanks to God for Leah Chase.

- Moon Landrieu, Judge and Former Mayor of New Orleans (1970-78)

Leah Chase embodies the generosity and warm embrace of New Orleans. She has made our city a better place by building bridges among our many communities and nourishing us all, literally and spiritually.



- Jim Amoss, Editor & Vice-President of Content, NOLA Media Group, formerly The Times-Picayune

Arthur Davis, Leah and Mayor Dutch Morial

Leah Chase has been an icon as far back as I can remember. Her name is synonymous with New Orleans for she has extended her support and incredible generosity to so many people and causes:

from the Civil Rights movement, hosting and supporting the leaders and activists of that struggle during trying times; to African American artists; to the arts throughout the city; to the education of our children and leaders of the future, to the culinary arts, to the unique culture of New Orleans. There are few if any causes in our city that Leah has not touched with her inimitable style and hearty support. Leah is an extraordinary woman, who, as an able ambassador for the city, has enhanced its image as well as its quality of life with her commitment and dedication to whatever task is at hand and she is still going strong at 90.

- Sybil Morial, Educator, Wife of former Mayor of New Orleans the late Ernest N. "Dutch" Morial and Mother of former Mayor of New Orleans Marc H. Morial

Sybil Morial and Leah on Holy Thursday, Gumbo Z'herbes Day
Photo courtesy Ted Jackson, The Times-Picayune



I grew up in Algiers on the Westbank of New Orleans in the 1950's and I played New Orleans Recreation Department (NORD) Bantam Football for Fox Playground on Whitney Avenue. Our teams were perennial champs of the racially segregated all Black division of NORD's pre-high school teams. All the Black Bantam players in the league looked forward to the annual NORD Football Banquet at Dooky Chase Restaurant. We dressed with white shirts and ties, took the Canal Street Ferry, and walked to Dooky's for the banquet's fried chicken dinners and a photo of all of the league players which later appeared in the Louisiana Weekly Newspaper.

In high school and college, Dooky's was the favorite place for an after-prom steak dinner date. Black celebrities who came to entertain in a racially segregated New Orleans, Duke Ellington, Nat King Cole, and Sarah Vaughn - all frequented Dooky's. Ray Charles in his famous R&B hit, "Early Morning Blues" immortalized Dooky's with his lyrics: "....Went to Dooky Chase to get something to eat, the waitress looked at me and said, 'Ray you sure look beat,' well it's early in the morning....."

Things changed radically in the 1960's and during those tumultuous days Dooky's was the only restaurant where Black and White civil rights workers could meet and eat together without being arrested. I can only imagine what kind of awful harassments the Chase Family had to endure for the welcome that they extended to interracial gatherings. In the 70's, with Random House and its then editor Toni Morrison we published the "Creole Feast" cookbook with Nathaniel Burton of Broussard's Restaurant, Leah Chase and 15 other African American New Orleans Chefs. I was privileged to be invited on a book promotional tour with Leah and to accompany her on the first of a lifelong series of trips that she would ultimately make to New York City.

For six decades, I have observed the Dooky Chase Restaurant evolve into a cultural center, a place of Black fashion and style, and an incubator of Black people's aspirations to succeed in every way possible. So much of our history, art, aesthetics, joys and tears are embedded in those walls, and in those kitchen pots and pans. There are decades of pride on those dining room serving plates. Dooky's is a cathedral of our collective identity, hard work, hopes and happiness.

I love Leah Chase for her contributions to Creole cuisine, Civil Rights, and African American art and artists. She is incomparably wise and graceful interacting with ease with presidents and paupers alike. She epitomizes the love of family and the Black Creole culture. I speak for generations of boys and girls who grew up at her side and were inspired by her love and spirit to become proud and persevering African American men and women.

History will dare not forget Leah's life and achievements, nor fail to celebrate her contributions to humankind; to do so would render history itself meaningless. God perfected Leah Chase for us to love and enjoy in a blessed way. "O taste and see" that she is as good as anybody ever was or will be. May God continue to bless this remarkable and iconic lady.

- Rudy Lombard, PhD.

John O'Neal and Rudy Lombard enjoy a conversation in the dining room



Music & Entertainment

Throughout my years as an Assistant Director at the New Orleans Museum of Art I had many opportunities to witness Mrs. Leah Chase's extraordinary generosity. She supported innumerable NOMA projects. We always knew people would show up in droves if they knew the art event, committee meeting or fundraiser in question would be accompanied by tasty morsels from Mrs. Chase's kitchen!

But one of my most personal and endearing memories of Leah Chase was after I moved from NOMA to my position as Executive Director of the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra. In 2002, the Orchestra commissioned the creative trumpeter and composer, Hannibal Lukumbe, to write a symphonic work in honor of Dooky and Leah Chase's contributions to civil rights. And, although Dooky was the renowned musician in the Chase family, no one embraced the project more enthusiastically than Leah.

A good thing, too. For it meant invading the sanctity of her kitchen, something few people are allowed to do. But there the irrepressible Hannibal Lukumbe tested out the distinctive sounds of a number of Dooky Chase Restaurant's pots and pans. Then the chosen ones were removed. For, in his inimitable way, Hannibal Lukumbe insisted they be part of his new work since they were so much a part of Leah's work. So up on stage they went, strung on a frame to become the LPO percussionist's instrument of the evening.

It was a wonderful and splendid occasion with engaging music and an enthusiastic and diverse audience. And while, to a person, they rose to their feet to applaud the new composition, they roared with love and affection for the honorees of the evening; a couple who have spent their lives bringing people together.

- Sharon Litwin, former Assistant Director, New Orleans Museum of Art and former Executive Director of the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra



Leah with Hannibal Lukumbe



Leah, John Bullard and Sharon Litwin

The Chases vigorously worked to open doors for African American musicians and entertainers. Dooky, as a legendary musician and leader of the Dooky Chase Orchestra, was the first African American to co-promote a musical concert held in the Municipal Auditorium. It was a star studded line-up that included Duke Ellington and his orchestra, Nat King Cole, Sara Vaughn, dancer Clayton "Peg Leg" Bates and comedians Timmy Rodgers and Patterson & Jackson.

"When old timers talk about the good old days, Dooky's was there, and is still standing today."

- Ellis Marsalis, Jr., Musician

This historical event was enjoyed by a racially mixed audience during the era of segregation. Music softens the rough edges of disagreement and invites commonality among those who see themselves as friends.



The Dooky Chase Orchestra (First row: Warren Bell Sr., Larry Smith, Charlie Gaspard, Sterling White, Hilton Carter and Curtis Trevigne; 2nd row: Awood Johnson, Benjamin Powell, Edgar "Dooky" Chase, John "Pickey" Brunious, Doris Chase, and Andrew Smith; 3rd row: Anthony Moret, Theodore Riley, Arnold Depass, Vernel Fournier and LeRoy "Batman" Rankins).

Courtesy of the Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.

Boxer Joe Louis (second from left) with Dooky Jr. (far left), Lucius "Lucky" Millinder and Dooky Sr.

Photo courtesy "Speed" Lunnon Porter's Photos.



Dooky and Lionel Ferbos, the oldest jazz musician in New Orleans

Leah and music legend Fats Domino



Dooky (left) with legendary jazz trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie (middle) and Leah (right)



I remember going to Dooky's as a teenager getting my favorite sandwich; Oysters. In the early days of my musical development I would play an early gig (9 pm) and go to Dooky's afterward and hang until the early morning (2 am) jam sessions in the French Quarter. If my memory serves me correctly, "Big" Dooky, Leah's father-in-law, would be standing behind the bar, serving drinks single handed. When old timers talk about the good old days, Dooky's was there and is still standing today. Here's hoping the legacy continues well into the future.

- Ellis Marsalis, Jr., Musician

I have had the pleasure of knowing Leah and Dooky for many years. Over the years, I have frequented their restaurant and have always been greeted with their warm and welcoming smiles. They are very kind, genuine people and an inspiration to many. I have always admired the personal dedication and commitment they have to both their family and business. The love they have for their family transcends to their professional lives. They also hold the city of New Orleans close to their hearts. I can say that it has been a blessing to know both Leah and Dooky all of these years.

- Antoine "Fats" Domino, Jr., Musician



Dooky (second from left) with Fats Domino (second from right) and friends

As the old saying goes, behind every good man there is a good woman. The good man is Dooky Chase Jr. Dooky had a great love for music. After high school he and his friends started The Dooky Chase Orchestra. His band members were Hilton Carter, Larry Smith, Lil Bibs, Benjamin Powell, Warren Bell Sr., Edward Sentino, Emery Thompson and Duke Garrison. The band became one of the greatest of its time, with some of the great musicians that lived in the city.

My first meeting with Ms. Chase was at a club on Dumaine Street. We were listening to the Dooky Chase Orchestra. At around that time she began working in the restaurant with Dooky. Everyone knew her from the LaFitte Project and around the Treme Corridor for her good hot sausage sandwiches.

Upon my return from the Army in 1957, I went into the restaurant business and I would see Leah regularly. Together, we have achieved some milestones in the business. She was instrumental in getting all the Black owned restaurants involved in one of the LINKS organization fundraisers held annually at the New Orleans Museum of Art. The restaurants included Rainey's, Austin Leslie, Wayne Baguet and Prout's which made for a successful event. The City of New Orleans is fortunate to have such an important long-standing business as Dooky Chase Restaurant.

- George V. Rainey, Retired, Restaurant Owner

Food & Dining

On any given day at Dooky Chase's on Orleans Avenue you will be sure to find the Queen of Creole Cuisine, Leah Chase, preparing gumbo, crawfish etouffee, fried chicken, red beans and rice, catfish and an array of traditional Creole delicacies. You will also see her making the rounds to every table in the restaurant, infusing everyone with her welcoming warmth.

“What is a chef? A chef is a leader in the kitchen. A chef is a manager of food and culinary technique and philosophy. A cook is a technician, the person with the skills to make something happen in a pot. And a chef and a cook come together to wow the palette of the guests in the dining room. Is Leah a chef or a cook? She's both, and a whole lot more.”

– Chef John Folse

Together, Leah and Dooky have achieved the American Dream in the restaurant business and in life. The restaurant and the Chase Family are beacons of hope – extending themselves to others always. At Dooky Chase's you'll find beautiful and tasty creole dishes, kind words and the safety of home.



The late Emily Chase Haydel, Daughter, worked closely with her parents in the restaurant



John Folse and Leah with students from the Chef John Folse Culinary Institute at Nicholls State University

I have considered Leah one of my most cherished mentors for nearly twenty years, but have admired her for even longer. I look to her, not just for her work ethic, soul-warming food and her ability to remain a relevant female figure in the male-dominated restaurant scene, but also for her love for humanity. Leah has always said “the hood needs good” and she has never forgotten those who need remembering, even during difficult times like Katrina and, of course, during the turmoil of the civil rights movement. Dooky Chase is known for being one of the first integrated restaurants in the South, making her place in history well-documented, but she won a place in my book over our shared love of crawfish. Who knew this Swede could have so much in common with the Queen of Creole Cuisine?

– Marcus Samuelsson, Chef

They say you always remember your first time, and I certainly remember the first time I met Leah Chase. It was in the mid 80's on a flight from New Orleans to New York City. A bunch of Louisiana chefs were invited to do a series of cooking demonstrations at Bloomingdale's in Manhattan, and I was lucky enough to have Leah Chase as my seatmate on the flight. It was right there on that Delta flight that our love affair began. I really did fall in love with Leah on that trip. She was humble and talented and she loved her culture and cuisine.

I have many fabulous “Leah Moments.” One of my favorites is to sneak through the side door of Dooky Chase and slip undetected into her inner sanctuary. I love stealing a moment to watch Leah at the stove, and realizing that I am in the presence of a culinary legend.

The reasons to love Leah are many: her unbelievable fried chicken and gumbo des z'herbes on Holy Thursday, her fabulous cookbooks, her charming personality, her work as a Civil Rights activist and community leader. She's garnered every award and honorary degree imaginable in New Orleans and across the country. A few years ago Louisiana Public Broadcasting named Leah a “Louisiana Legend.” That she is, and so much more. Of course, Leah's response to this honor was simply, “Ah, a legend award just means you're old.” Baby, you're not old; like our cast iron pots, you're just well seasoned! And, none of us would want you any other way!

– John Folse, Chef

Leah Chase is a lady and a leader. She has the love and respect of this city which she deserves. Leah pushed this city when it needed pushing and held it together when it needed that glue. She is no-nonsense in her cooking and in her view of the world. Leah Chase makes me want to be a better person.

– Ella Brennan, Owner, Commander's Palace Restaurant





**Dooky
Chase's
Restaurant**
Since 1941

In the late 50's, Leah Chase was managing and cooking in her fine "for-profit" restaurant. She was using a "non-profit" big heart financial method. If you were hungry and had little or no funds, she fed you.

I know during my law school days, with minimal resources, on Saturdays, while using Attorney AP Tureaud's office to study down the block from Dooky's on Orleans Avenue, I was given a larger portion of red beans and rice than my 35¢ lunch budget allowed. It helped carry me through those study hours for a full afternoon.

Leah's giving to this community and people have continued over these past decades. She set the tone that "giving" is a virtue and the returns to the donor are everlasting, greater than the monetary value could ever bring.

*- Dr. Norman Francis, President,
Xavier University of Louisiana*



Whenever we think of Dooky Chase's Restaurant we picture Mr. Chase greeting all of the patrons at the door with a big smile.

We also picture Mrs. Chase lovingly wearing her chef's hat and jacket while stirring up scrumptious meals in the kitchen... but always taking time out to greet guests table by table with words of wisdom. This is what makes the restaurant so personal for everyone!

*- Alden McDonald, President & CEO of Liberty Bank and Trust Company,
and wife, Rhesa McDonald*



Revius and I loved to go to Dooky's for two reasons... great food and to see and talk with Leah and Dooky. Dooky's will always be special to me because Revius and I celebrated all our special occasions with family at this restaurant. Revius would have it no other way!

We visited the restaurant so often that Leah assigned Revius a table. And we never needed a menu - we always ordered the same thing... fried catfish and potato salad!

*- Miriam Victorienne Ortigue, Wife of the late
LA Supreme Court Justice Revius Ortigue*



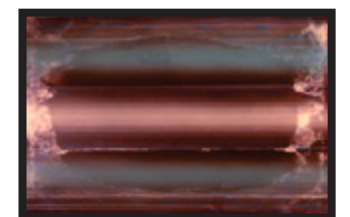
Art

The Chases are enthusiastic patrons of African American art and have helped to create opportunities for African American artists to showcase their talents. Their collection – displayed on the walls of Dooky Chase – was at one time considered New Orleans’ premier collection of African American art.

“To walk into Dooky Chase Restaurant is to walk into a gallery.”

– Stella Jones, Owner, Stella Jones Gallery

To this day, Leah serves on the Board of the New Orleans Museum of Art and has even testified before Congress to lobby for greater funding for the National Endowment for the Arts. Dooky and Leah are true ambassadors for the creative arts and have empowered and inspired generations of artists to live their dreams.



The food at Dooky Chase's Restaurant has been celebrated for decades and Leah Chase has long been in the pantheon of great American chefs. An important factor in making the dining experience at this restaurant so special is the extraordinary collection of contemporary art which hangs on its walls. Beginning with her election as a Trustee of the New Orleans Museum of Art in 1977, Leah became a collector of African American art. This high quality and comprehensive collection now includes works by national masters like Jacob Lawrence, Elizabeth Catlett and New Orleans' own John Scott, and young and emerging talents.

Leah was never a passive collector, she soon became a vocal champion and close friend of these artists. She has been a role model for other collectors and certainly inspired our museum to form its own collection of African American art. Over the years the tens of thousands of guests - including Presidents Bush and Obama - who have enjoyed the food and hospitality at Dooky Chase's also have had the unique experience of dining surrounded by great African American art.

- E. John Bullard, Director Emeritus, New Orleans Museum of Art

Harry and I first met Leah Chase in the mid-1980's. I was awed by Leah's dedication to female entrepreneurship, guiding the youth in the community and ensuring the longevity of Southern Black culture. In all of those aspects, I recognized a kindred spirit and our friendship has grown exponentially because of the strength of our shared commitment.

I began my journey in the arts as a collector and I found that Leah was a well-informed source of the "who, what and where of New Orleans art." To walk into Dooky Chase Restaurant is to walk into a gallery. It is very apparent that for the Chases, an important part of the dining experience is that their patrons get to know artists of the African Diaspora - and particularly local artists. When I determined to mold my love of Black Art into a business venture, I reached out to those in the area that I knew would support my dreams and recognize that a successful gallery would be a much needed community space and endeavor. Of course, Leah was at the top of that list. She was immediately supportive of my goal and was generous with lessons she had learned. She imparted it all in her trademark no-nonsense manner. She was there at the beginning and her support of Stella Jones Gallery has never wavered.

After an opening, every artist that exhibits at the gallery goes to Dooky Chase to experience another aspect of New Orleans culture. They spend the evening enjoying her delectable food but more importantly dishing about art and life. They come having only heard of Leah, the Creole Queen, but they leave loving her. Unequivocally, the Chases and Dooky Chase Restaurant have been an integral part of the success that the Stella Jones Gallery has achieved. Harry and I are proud to call Leah a friend and our lives are richer for it.

- Stella Jones, Owner, Stella Jones Gallery

I have known Mrs. Chase and been her friend since she was younger than the age that I am today. I frequented Dooky's since my teenage years in the 60's. My wife, Jo, and I gained an even deeper friendship with Mrs. Chase in the 70's, becoming more like family. So much so, that she christened our daughter, Rhea.

Then and now, we were mutually concerned with the shape of African-American arts and culture, particularly here in New Orleans. Together, we shared many meals, explored ideas, and offered mutual support to each other about our concerns of the day, personal and otherwise. Mrs. Chase said: "We need to be involved in every facet of the city's contemporary development." Her mantra was, "We need to participate." Her interest in art led her to become one of my patrons as well as supporting many other local artists.

From the inception of the restaurant as a destination for contemporary African American Art, I installed the artwork under the watchful eye of my wife, who Mrs. Chase continues to proclaim had a superior eye for placing the work. The public exhibition of the art she had collected garnered the attention of the community and guests of the restaurant. Local and national artists wanted to be a part of Mrs. Chase's presentation of African American art. We would frequently say, if you want to find African American art, you could simply go to Dooky's. This created a tremendous sense of pride in the community.

As the restaurant expanded so did the acquisitions to include more notable artists such as John Biggers, Romare Bearden, Willie Birch, Bruce Brice, Elizabeth Catlett, Richard Hunt, Jacob Lawrence, Samella Lewis, John Scott, Martin Payton... the list goes on.

In retrospect, I'm reminded that the Dooky Chase gallery presentations began around the same time New Orleans expanded its contemporary art venues beyond Royal Street to the present day Arts District. Through expanding connections and contacts in the art world, Dooky Chase has become an exemplary exhibition space outside of the Arts District in New Orleans.

On a daily basis, Mrs. Chase has talked the talk and walked the walk, even with physical pain that would be unbearable for most. She has worked the trenches to center stage, passing on her knowledge and wisdom about what it takes to uplift people, and what it takes to be a part of moving and shaping the community. Quiet as it's kept; Mrs. Chase is a cultural icon.

- Clifton Webb, Artist

From Leah Chase: Listen, I Say Like This by Carol Allen, © 2002 by Carol Allen used by permission of the publisher, Pelican Publishing Company, Inc. www.pelicanpub.com



Faith & Philanthropy

The Chases are actively engaged in their faith and philanthropy, supporting the values and causes that are most important to them. Dooky and Leah readily support churches, schools and civic organizations through action, like baking hundreds of lemon meringue pies, and through example, like passing their faith down to their children and grandchildren.

“Leah starts each day talking to God: ‘Lord, give me the strength to get through the day.’ She ends each day saying, ‘Thank you, Lord – one more day.’ They seem to make a good pair, Leah and God. Together, they are changing a neighborhood, a city, and a nation for the betterment of mankind.”

– Excerpt from “Leah Chase: Listen, I Say Like This”

Leah has also provided visionary leadership as President of the Women’s Auxiliary of Flint-Goodridge Hospital and served as chair of one of the earliest Ebony Fashion Fair Fashion Shows, a fundraiser to sustain the operational mission of Flint-Goodridge Hospital, New Orleans’ primary health care facility for African Americans during the era of racial segregation.

The Edgar L. “Dooky” Jr. and Leah Chase Family Foundation

Established in January 2013, The Edgar L. “Dooky” Jr. and Leah Chase Family Foundation celebrates the lifelong civic and community contributions of Dooky and Leah Chase. The foundation serves as a conduit to continue their community work through those who embody similar passions and values. The Chase Family Foundation holds fundraising activities and presents award grants to persons or organizations that make significant contributions to education, creative and culinary arts and social justice.

The Edgar L. “Dooky” Jr. and Leah Chase Family Foundation
P.O. Box 791313
New Orleans, LA 70179



Leah and Chef John Besh team up to feed the volunteers working to clean up the restaurant after Hurricane Katrina.



Crucifixes adorn the entrance to Leah's kitchen.



The Chase Family at the Chapel of the North American Martyrs, Jesuit High School

Pray, work hard, and do for others; that is what my grandfather told my mother. These words have not only guided my mother's life but my life as well. My parents taught by example. I learned that prayer was important and it became a part of my daily routine. My mother said that you could never pray too much.

My parents insisted that their children attend Catholic schools. They wanted us to be grounded in our religion. It was during this time that my parents became involved in our church and school. My mother was the PTA president and chaired a lot of fundraising projects. She was also our Girl Scout Leader. She stayed involved and made sure that we assisted as well. Whenever the Sisters were short-handed, my sister and I were sent to the convent to help out. We washed dishes and did whatever else was needed.

My father did his share as well. Not long ago, a Sister told me that one of her favorite memories was my father delivering food from the restaurant to the convent. She said she really enjoyed those days.

- Stella Chase Reese, Daughter



Photo courtesy of The Times-Picayune

Excerpt from 1997 Loving Cup Recognition: "The Times-Picayune Loving Cup is given annually to someone in our community who gives to others without expectation of material reward. Leah Chase's life fits the purpose of the Cup perfectly. Her philanthropy, her good heart, her unquenchable desire to do somebody some good, every day, puts her firmly in the tradition of giving that this Cup honors."

- Ashton Phelps, Jr., Retired, Publisher

Leah is a remarkable woman by anyone's account. An exceptional, creative chef; a lover of art and an art collector; and active worker throughout her adult life on behalf of human rights, including her work during the Civil Rights movement; a generous contributor to all sorts of causes, not only those she believes in but so many simply because she is asked.

Leah gives of her talent and her treasure. I know of nothing Leah was ever asked to donate or to provide that she refused. Virtually every organization in town has enjoyed her food. I came to know and appreciate Leah when she and I became charter members of the Louisiana chapter of the International Women's Forum. We traveled to gatherings of the organization and everyone soon came to know and value Leah. During this past year, Leah was honored by the International Women's Forum as A Woman Who Makes A Difference, the organization's highest honor.

Leah Chase is a renaissance woman but she is even more than that; she is a singular, spectacular woman who continues to do her best to change the world.

- Flo Schornstein, former Director of the City's Parks and Parkways Department and Community Activist

Shortly after Leah received The Times-Picayune Loving Cup Award in 1997, I was having dinner in the restaurant and she joined our table. As an off-the-cuff comment, I asked, "Leah, who's writing your story?" She threw her head back, laughed, and said, "Now that would be a story to tell."

That was the beginning of a thrilling three-year journey. We spent hours together in the restaurant, at events, in the car... I asked questions and she talked. I met the entire family, and many close friends. I talked to chefs, businessmen, politicians, her priest, taxi cab drivers, civil rights activists... The resources were endless.

Hundreds of hours of recordings and multiple written drafts later, I had a book. But more important than the book, I had Leah Lange Chase infused into my very being. Being with her, talking, laughing, sharing, traveling, I soaked up every morsel of her goodness, good sense, and good humor that I could.

I treasure my time with Miss Leah, mull over her wisdom, quote her, use her as an example, and wish her and Dooky well as they continue to believe in themselves and their fellow human beings, with faith that they can improve our world.

- Carol Allen, Author: Leah Chase: Listen, I Say Like This



I have known Dooky and Leah Chase for over 20 years. The Chase family has been a part of the St. Peter Claver Church community for over 75 years. They are an instrumental part of the fabric of the St. Peter Claver faith community. Deeply rooted in strong beliefs and values, they have shared their gifts and talents with us and beyond, embracing an entire community.

Through the Dooky Chase Restaurant, the Chases have touched the lives of their neighbors in Tremé, Lafitte and up and down the Orleans Avenue Corridor, bringing hope and respect to all people. Leading by example, they have taught their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren to put Christ first, live and practice the faith and above all reach out to others.

As the owners of a successful black-owned restaurant, the Chases have demonstrated how to be the best that you can be and never forget your community. Their contributions to business, education, food, the arts, music and the Civil Rights movement are unparalleled examples of giving unselfishly to God, to city and to the local community.

Dooky and Leah have given of themselves their entire lives. Each day is a day of blessing for them. I am privileged to be a part of their lives and the lives of their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. They have taught me much about my own belief in Christ and the value and importance of family.

- Rev. Michael P. Jacques, S.S.E., Pastor, St. Peter Claver Church

Nourishing the Community

Food is as essential to life as breathing. And the relationship we have with food – that we live off it and it becomes part of us – is intimate. It is, then, natural that Leah and Dooky Chase would embrace the roll of our providers.

With a seemingly endless supply of energy, Dooky and Leah have become part of our lives at the most basic level.

Leah Chase has said, “We need to be involved in every facet of the city’s contemporary development ... we need to participate!” And they have. They have led by example. Quietly. With the strength of their faith lending strength to their convictions.

At this crossroads they simply call “the restaurant,” families share their history and friends share their dreams. A warm meal soothes us. The spices excite us. Art and music inspire us. And the neighborhood is recharged. Thank you, Dooky and Leah, for your passion, inspiration and love.





Thank You

to those who shared their memories
of Dooky and Leah

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