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THT offers special event with flavorful food - and a fun behind-the-scenes tour

By Sophie Braccini



Suzie Shepard, left, and Lauren McCabe Herpich get ready for a food adventure at Town Hall Theatre. Photo Sophie Braccini

Town Hall Theatre in Lafayette will become the conduit between Jane Austen and food this month when curious patrons explore how Jane Austen's "Sense and Sensibility" is brought to life by the local theater's team, while tasting local delicious food along the way. The unique two-hour event will also take participants back to the early 20th century, 100 years after "Sense and Sensibility" was written, when Town Hall was first built, becoming the first meeting place in the budding enclave.

The idea to bring Local Food Adventures to Town Hall Theatre was sparked from a conversation between Lafayette entrepreneur Lauren McCabe Herpich and THT's Suzie Shepard. Herpich, a Lafayette resident, started leading food tours four years ago, first in Rockridge, then in different Oakland and Berkeley neighborhoods, and now in Lafayette. Her desire is to enhance people's curiosity about their communities by indulging in their sense of taste. Shepard saw an opportunity to celebrate the creativity of women,

focusing on writer Jane Austen, theater director Susan Evans, restaurant manager Laura Magu of *Röve* Bistro, entrepreneurs Linda Hofmeister and Susan Rossi of Hofssi chocolate, and more.

The result is an eclectic, entertaining, educational and delicious evening that will take participants through the history of THT, from its erection in 1914 as a town hall for community gatherings to becoming a theater in 1947, and its importance today. After indulging in different foods by *Röve* Bistro and drinks by the Lamorinda Wine Growers Association, that evening's explorers will go backstage to see some of the secret ingredients behind THT's next main stage production, "Sense and Sensibility."

Shepard says that Managing Director Dennis Markam was somewhat apprehensive at first about letting prospective future audience members in on some of the secrets of a coming production. Creating a show, and fabricating the illusion of reality on stage for a few hours, requires a lot of technique and know-how. People will be able to access the mechanical room and explore some of the machinery, talk to the costume designer and learn the tricks used to create realistic costumes that sometimes have to come off and on very quickly. They will also engage in a conversation with Susan Evans, THT's artistic director who will direct this last show of the season, and learn about the vision of the novel she is bringing to the stage.

Other goodies will be offered along the way such as learning the proper way to taste authentic extra virgin olive oils and balsamic vinegar flavors inspired by Jane Austen's literary work.

The April 14 tour is unique and limited to 24 guests. Tickets are \$40 for subscribers and \$45 for non-subscribers, and are available through the Box Office at (925) 283-1557 or online at www.townhalltheatre.com/com-engagement/.

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