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**ON THE WEB**  
  
**Magazine**

Culinary creations are in the spotlight in this month's *L Magazine*. Read more about local female chefs, boutique catering and more. Go to [theadvertiser.com/lmagazine](http://theadvertiser.com/lmagazine) or pick up your copy on newsstands now.

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**See more on Page 10C**

**WE WERE MERCHANTS**  
 Local shops are on display in *We Were Merchants*. Read more on **Page 5C**.

## Book news

Local shops are on display in *We Were Merchants*. Read more on **Page 5C**.

## INSIDE Brides and engagements

- Mrs. William Bujard
- Mrs. Bradley Lafleur
- Mrs. Travis Coleman
- David Pittman and Bridget Daspit
- Courtney Osborn and Eric Hebert
- Ashleigh Dugas and Jonas Landry
- Annie Hendricks and John Abraham, Esq.
- Sabrina Surginer and Keith Jenkins
- Rande' DuBois and Woody Goodly Jr.
- Hank Duhon and Andrea Schrupf
- Carolyn DeCuir and Kevin Landry
- Melissa Pittman and Davis Goudeau III

## Anniversaries

- Walter and Una Borel
- Patrick and Truley Juneau
- Roland and Lou Mary Kidder
- Joseph Louis (Bay) and Grace Hebert
- Louis and Euline Bodoin

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# The Secret Ingredient



Photos courtesy of Gwen Aucoin

Guests enjoy the meal at the last blue.dinner underground event.

## Underground dinners mix guests and haute cuisine

**Krista Richmond**  
[krichmond@theadvertiser.com](mailto:krichmond@theadvertiser.com)

It's not a dinner party. Instead, underground dinners are a gathering of random guests, sometimes in costume, at a venue kept secret until the last minute with a menu tied to a theme. And Abi and Manny Augello are bringing this big city trend to Lafayette.

"We read about it and asked, 'Why isn't this in Lafayette,'" Abi Augello said.

Chefs in metropolitan areas such as Los Angeles and New York City have held these secretive dinners for years. But when the Augellos looked into underground dinners, they found none that were close enough to attend. So, Abi, a corporate event planner and social media consultant, and Manny, sous chef at Jolie's Louisiana Bistro, decided to pool their talents and start blue.dinner underground.

"It felt like an opportunity to work together," Abi said. "I find the awesome venue, and he provides the awesome menu. We couldn't do it with anyone else."

The name comes from different meanings of blue, according to Abi. Blue can mean simplicity, and she says their philosophy is to "keep everything as it is and

enhance what's there." In the culinary world, "blue" means to sear meat quickly on both sides before serving. And blue comedy is slightly off-collar and a little raunchy. Augello hopes all of these elements factor into the underground dinners.

"Each one you come to is completely different," Abi said.

"Yeah, it's on the edge of tongue-in-cheek," Manny added. "It gets people out of their comfort zone."

Anyone can come to a blue.dinner underground event; it's on a first-come, first-serve basis and costs \$75. You can reserve your seat by going to the event's page at [facebook.com](http://facebook.com), downloading the registration form and sending that in with your payment.

That unique blend of guests and "the satisfaction on people's faces" is what they love most about these events.

"It's important to dine with people who aren't in your circle," Abi said. "It breaks barriers. You'll be exposed to new things, and that can only better you."

However, there are a few rules. Guests have a time and date but don't know the location until they get a text message two hours before it starts.

"The more you can strip away



Manny and Abi Augello started blue.dinner underground in Lafayette.

without making people uncomfortable, the better it is in the end," Abi said.

The planning starts with the venue, which generally come from suggestions. Most of the time, according to Abi, there is no kitchen, etc., and everything must be brought in — "that's the challenge," she says.

After the venue is reserved, the Augellos start thinking about themes. And they let the space dictate the feeling. For example, they turned a warehouse full of unusual woods into a Cuban-themed blue.

**See UNDER on Page 9C**



Submitted Photo

Team members appearing Monday night in The Learning Channel's *Ultimate Cake-Off* competition include, from left, Jennifer Dontz of Michigan, Denise Talbot of Texas and St. Martinville sisters Martha Hebert and Becky Guidry.

## Sisters compete in TV Cake Off

**Bruce Brown**  
[bbrown@theadvertiser.com](mailto:bbrown@theadvertiser.com)

**ST. MARTINVILLE** — From the first introductory phone call to the get-acquainted DVD to the show itself, producers of The Learning Channel's *Ultimate Cake Off* show weren't quite sure what to make of sisters Martha Hebert and Becky Guidry.

The two retired home economists from UL run Sweet Southern Ladies Designer Cakes in St. Martinville and have spent the last five years in that business and teaching their secrets to others across the nation.

But they're going to have a tough time matching their *Cake Off* experience, which will air Monday night on TLC.

"Becky was on the Internet, in a Cake Central chat room," Hebert said of her younger sister. "There was a blog saying a casting director was looking for unknown talent, someone who could do extreme cakes for the show."

"We said, 'We could do that!' and sent them a couple of pictures. It was almost deadline, but we sent it off and then forgot about it."

The producers, however, hadn't forgotten them.

"I got a phone call, and this guy said, 'I'm Frank, and I'm the director of the *Ultimate Cake Off*,'" Hebert said. "I said, 'I don't think this is funny,' and I hung up on him. I just knew I was being punk'd."

**See CAKE on Page 2C**

# Books are the perfect escape mechanism

Reading a good book is as comforting for me as my mother's chicken and dumplings — and that's a statement.

Ironically, anything offering calm and stress relief would have been good additions to my life over the past few months, but I've been so far out of my comfort zone that sitting and reading has been a challenge. Now that I have a "real" job again and some sense of normalcy has resumed in my life, I've found myself gobbling up good books right and left. Right now I find myself appreciating reading as the perfect escape mechanism — and the titles I've been reading lately reflect that tendency.

No matter how overexposed Dan Brown and his books may be, I've enjoyed them. His latest book, *The Lost Symbol*, was released Sept. 18. Read the book to learn the significance of the date. While the nature of the

**Jan Risher**  
 Long Story Short



story follows along with *The Da Vinci Code*, the Washington, D.C., setting is fun.

Diana Gabaldon's *Outlander* series has made my heart sing for years. Her latest book, *An Echo in the Bone*, was released last week. If you've enjoyed the epic, slightly bizarre tales, you'll be happy to know that she picks up right where she left off.

*The Help* by Katherine Stockett is an uplifting first novel, garnering much acclaim. Set in Jackson, Miss., in the 1960s, the novel explores the relationship between families and the people who worked for them.

*Mistakes Were Made (But Not by Me)* sits on the more serious side of my bookshelf. Written

by Carol Tavris and Elliot Aaronson, the tome tackles self-rationalization even the best intentioned among us use to cope with terrible behavior. The book's message has the power to change lives.

2666 by the late, great Robert Bolano, is the grisly telling of the hundreds of unsolved murders of women along the border of Juarez, near El Paso, Texas. I lived on that border during the time chronicled, but don't take my word for the value of this book — *Time* magazine named the book the best book of 2008.

Also on my list:  
 ■ *Hunger Games* and *Catching Fire* by Suzanne Collins. Political suspense, adventure, romance. How can you go wrong?  
 ■ *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* by Junot Diaz. Fantastic read and deserving of all the praise it's garnered.

■ *The Magicians* by Lev

Grossman. My friend Drew Zeigler, manager of Lafayette's Barnes and Noble, describes it as, "*Harry Potter* meets the *Chronicles of Narnia* in a blender of subversion."

■ *The Tortilla Curtain*, by T.C. Boyle, is all about middle-class values, xenophobia and illegal immigration.

■ *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* and *The Girl Who Played with Fire*, by Stieg Larsson, are two of my all-time favorites, but not for the faint of heart.

■ *Sacred Hearts*, by Sarah Dunant, tells the tale of the secret lives of nuns for historical fiction lovers out there.

■ *Ravens*, by George Dawes Green, is a new thriller. It's a dark comedy set in Georgia. Brace yourself. It's nightmarish.

*Jan Risher's column, Long Story Short, appears on Sundays. She can be reached at [jan@janrisher.com](mailto:jan@janrisher.com).*

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