

NATIONAL FOOD & BEVERAGE FOUNDATION

The National Food & Beverage Foundation Announces Recipient of the Inaugural Paul McIlhenny Culinary Entrepreneurism Scholarship

New Orleans, LA — The **National Food & Beverage Foundation (NatFAB)** recently selected Dwynesha "Dee" Lavigne to be the first recipient of the **Paul McIlhenny Culinary Entrepreneurism Scholarship**. Among the advantages and opportunities afforded by the scholarship, Ms. Lavigne will have use of the museum's Rouse's Culinary Innovation Center by Jenn-Air at the Southern Food & Beverage Museum (SoFAB) free of charge for one year. SoFAB staff will also assist her in marketing her business, **Deelightful Cupcakes**, and making the connections she needs to grow her business.

"Upon meeting Dee we knew she was extraordinarily talented," said Jyl Benson, SoFAB Culinary Programming Director. "With her skills, professionalism and boundless enthusiasm, we quickly determined she would be the ideal recipient of a scholarship which grants use of our licensed commercial commissary kitchen. Assisting culinary entrepreneurs in turning their career dreams into realities is central to what we do," adds Benson.

A graduate of the Culinary Institute of America (CIA) in Hyde Park, New York, Lavigne was born and raised in New Orleans as one of eight siblings. She began baking and cooking at the age of 7. Ms. Lavigne enrolled at the University of New Orleans but her education was interrupted when she married and moved to Oklahoma. "While my hubby spent his days studying and playing football for Oklahoma State University, I worked in the catering department at the university then at Wal-Mart and Stillwater Country Club as a cook and baker. I began to focus on my cake decorating skills," recalls Lavigne.

Then she set her sights on the CIA. Though 1500 miles away, she decided to take a leap of faith.

Lavigne spent 10 years with Whole Foods Markets as a Bakery Manager until she started her company, **Deelightful Cupcakes**, in July 2016.

The Paul McIlhenny Culinary Entrepreneurism Scholarship is endowed by a grant from the family of Paul McIlhenny, the late President and CEO of Tabasco Brand; the iconic Louisiana-made line of cayenne pepper hot sauces and condiments.

"My father was passionate about food and his preferred stage was the kitchen, where his leadership skills could really shine," said Rosemary McIlhenny. "It is a fine tribute to my father, one he would be

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proud of, to help Ms. Lavigne in advancing her culinary career through our partnership with the National Food & Beverage Foundation."

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