



For Immediate Release

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**National Food & Beverage Foundation (NatFAB) & Southern Food & Beverage Museum (SoFAB) name Chef Serigne "Love" Mbaye as Scholarship Recipient**

NEW ORLEANS, June 21, 2018--The **National Food & Beverage Foundation (NatFAB)** recently selected **Chef Serigne "Love" Mbaye** to be the second recipient of the **Paul McIlhenny Culinary Entrepreneurism Scholarship**. Among the advantages and opportunities afforded by the scholarship, Chef Mbaye will have use of the Rouse's Culinary Innovation Center by Jennair at the **Southern Food & Beverage Museum (SoFAB)** in New Orleans free of charge for one year. NatFAB/SoFAB staff will also assist him in furthering his culinary career and making the business and interpersonal connections he needs to grow professionally.

"Serigne has hosted several pop-up dinners with us. He is extraordinarily talented and bears an unrivaled work ethic," said **Jyl Benson**, SoFAB Culinary Programming Director." With his skills, professionalism and boundless enthusiasm, he is the ideal recipient of this scholarship. Assisting culinary entrepreneurs in turning their career dreams into realities is central to what we do."

As the scholarship recipient Mbaye replaces Chef Dwynesha "Dee" Lavigne, the first McIlhenny Scholarship recipient, who will continue to work in baking and pastry arts within the museum's culinary entrepreneurship program while moving into the role of mentor.

Mbaye is a graduate of the New England Culinary Institute, where he received The Gold Spoon Medal, the culinary equivalent of being awarded valedictorian.

"I am moved by the reality that, as a chef, I have the luxury to choose what people eat. To me that's very powerful, an awesome responsibility" said Mbaye, 24.

Born in New York and raised in his family's native Senegal, he spent much of his childhood in a religious boarding school in West Africa, separated from his

family. He returned to the United States at age 14. Following culinary school he was inspired to reconnect with his West African background by Chef Pierre Thiam, an internationally celebrated chef who was the first to write a Senegalese cookbook in English. While on his return visit to Senegal during an airport layover he made a chance connection with Cliff Hall, co-owner of New Orleans Fish House, who became a mentor and brought the young chef to New Orleans. He was soon employed by the legendary Commander's Palace, where he rose to the position of Senior Line Cook in six months.

He now serves as a Sous Chef at Café Adelaide in downtown New Orleans.

“Serigne’s personal mission, one shared by those of us at SoFAB, is to draw attention to the culinary contributions the enslaved West African people made to the culinary traditions of the American South,” said Elizabeth Williams, Executive Director of NatFAB. “Put a bowl of West African *soupoukandia* next to a bowl of New Orleans’ seafood gumbo and there will be no doubt as to the root of our most defining dish.”

The Paul McIlhenny Culinary Scholarship is endowed by a by a grant from the family of Paul McIlhenny, the late President & CEO of McIlhenny Company, the iconic Louisiana brand that makes Tabasco brand pepper sauces, condiments and products.

“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 proud of, to help Chef Mbaye in advancing his culinary career through our partnership with the National Food & Beverage Foundation.”

*Throughout the next year Chef Mbaye will be hosting frequent pop-up dinners with wine pairings at SoFab. A sample menu may include **Akra** (black-eye pea fritters with smothered onions sauce); a **salad of funio** (a gluten-free African grain) **tomatoes, sweet potatoes, pickled red onions and lemon vinaigrette**; **Yassa** (seared Gulf fish simmered in a sauce of citrus and onions with Senegalese spices; West African-style seafood gumbo finished with palm oil and a Senegalese rice pudding with seasonal fruit.*

Check out [southernfood.org](https://southernfood.org) for information on upcoming events with Chef Mbaye.

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