

CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH

## Southern Comfort Comes to Carle Place



Owners Lillian Dent and daughter Leisa Dent.

By Ken Austin

In the event that you haven't heard, there's a new restaurant in town, one that combines all of the requisites needed to transform "dinner out" to a memorable dining experience, one worthy of repeating again and again.

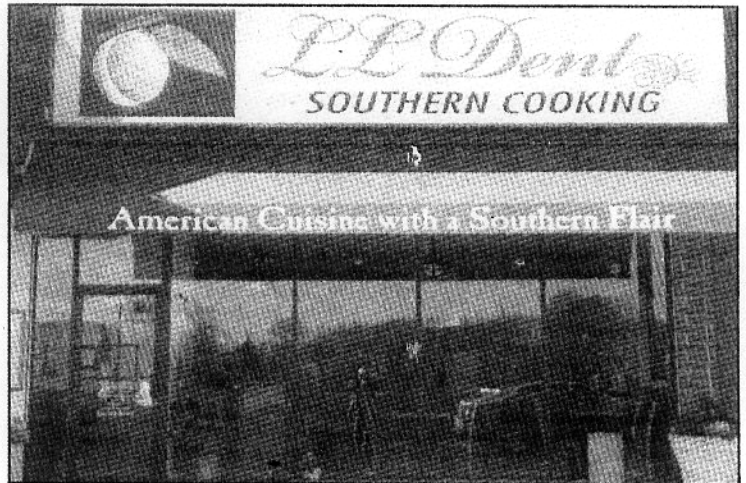
Lillian and Leisa Dent, the dynamic mother-daughter duo, and co-owners of L.L. Dent, self-described as a place for "American Cuisine with a Southern flair," have provided Western Long Islanders a tasty alternative to the myriad dining establishments that populate the Carle Place, Garden City, and Westbury area.

The restaurant which opened its doors a year ago this February represents the culmination of a shared dream by Lillian and Chef Leisa to one day open a restaurant which featured a number of her favorite dishes as well as several "hand-me-downs" from her mother, Lillian, her father, and grandparents. Lillian, a transplanted southerner from a small town in Georgia moved to New York in 1959 and after recently retiring from a successful business career with Dow Jones, put together a business plan with the aid of an advisor from The Small Business Administration. Then with her daughter, Leisa, a 1990 graduate of C.I.A., a culinary arts institute in

Poukepsic, N.Y., set out to find the right spot to launch their dream. Lillian stated "Leisa always had a knack for cooking which went back even before she started high school." When she got to high school, she decided to go to BOCES and split the day between classes in commercial food preparation and her regular classes. And as is often the case, Leisa thought that her parents wanted her to study business, so she went away to Howard University only to find out that this was not what she really wanted to do.

All one has to do is chat informally with Leisa and Lillian about L.L. Dent to clearly see and feel the passion and joy that this restaurant gives them. Yes—this was collectively the right choice for these two warm, engaging ladies who have parlayed their individual talents and knowledge as well as their mutual love, trust and respect for each other's opinions and developed what is clearly a winning combination.

LL Dent is a full service southern style restaurant, unique to Nassau County. It features lunch and dinner Tuesday thru Saturday. Appetizers include crispy-fried chicken livers, fruit and cheese platters, spicy chicken wings, and one of Chef Leisa's signature dishes, fried green tomatoes. One of the aforementioned "hand-me-downs," is Toby's



LL Dent restaurant in Carle Place, Long Island.

Georgia Hash. This soup dish consists of spicy ground pork and beef with stewed tomatoes, served with rice. This dish, named after Lillian's late husband, has, with its amazing simplicity, quickly become a favorite "starter" of many patrons, myself included.

Dinner entrees include both Southern Fried and Barbecue chicken, Pulled Pork, Turkey Meat loaf, Barbecue Spare Ribs, the trendy Tilapia, stewed and sautéed in a pepper, onion and tomato sauce, and another signature dish, Fried Catfish. All of the dishes come with a variety of sides featuring collard greens, candied yams, baked mac and cheese, grits, Hoppin' John (black-eyed peas and rice), and potato salad which to date is the closest to my mother's that anyone has come to in decades!

Desserts include pound cake, sweet potato pie, sugarless cheesecake, and another "hand-me-down," and one of my favorites, banana pudding. Chef Leisa's signature dessert is a warm peach cobbler, which I was "persuaded" to sample! One taste and I was hooked! To get the true traditional southern dining experience, you should partake in the Sunday brunch and try to sample as many of the menu choices that your palette can handle. A leisurely Sunday brunch will also afford you the occasion to meet and chat with the co-owners,

Lillian and Chef Leisa who love to mingle and greet their guests. Their wit and charm cap off a feeling of pure contentment that comes only from an outstanding meal.

Whereas Lillian prefers to refer to their cuisine as American food with a Southern flair, one look at the lip-smacking smiles and body language of the patrons after a delicious meal will tell you why Chef Leisa prefers to call it "Southern Comfort." Because as she laughingly puts it, "Lord knows that these folks get comfortable up in here!"

As LL Dent prepares to celebrate their one-year anniversary, my recommendation—drop in, wish them well, and give the menu a try. And let them know what you think. Not unlike many restaurateurs, Lillian and Leisa want their patrons to really experience their authentic home-style southern cuisine, complimented with a taste of good ole' southern hospitality, provided by their highly experienced staff. Who knows—as you leave, you just may hear that warm, traditional, "Y'all come back, now, ya hear?"

LL Dent 221 Old Country Road Carle Place, NY. 11514

### "COOKS' CORNER"

#### MY SISTERS TEXAS APPLE CAKE

Preheat oven at 350 degrees

#### Ingredients:

- 1 cup self rising flour
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup milk
- 1 stick butter (take out beforehand to let soften)
- 1 can of canned apples
- Cinnamon and vanilla

#### Preparation:

- Mix flour, sugar, milk, butter, cinnamon and vanilla by hand, make sure batter is well mixed.
- Cut canned apples (fine), add cinnamon, vanilla and sugar to taste
- Pour batter into deep pan, pour apples over batter (away from edges).
- Let bake until brown, apples will bake into batter.

#### "FRANCINE'S" SWEET POTATOE CHEESE CAKE

#### INGREDIENTS

- 24 oz of Philadelphia whipped cream cheese
- 2 small sweet potatoes (boil for about 1 & 1/2 hours, peel and mash until very fine or use food processor, must equal 1 cup once measured)
- 1 & 1/2 cups of sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon of cinnamon
- 1/8 teaspoon of nutmeg
- 1 & 1/2 teaspoons of pure vanilla extract
- 3 large eggs
- 2 Large Graham Cracker Pie Shells

#### PREPARATION

In large mixing bowl mix all ingredients until you have a smooth consistency. An electric mixer will provide best results. No strings from sweet potato should be present, just creamy sweet potato cream cheese.

- Bake in oven at 325 for approximately 50 minutes to 1 hour
- Let cool before placing plastic cover over pie to prevent condensation
- Refrigerate over night

ENJOY!