

Lisa Caldwell (left)
and her daughter
Lauren Caldwell Lea
in their game-day
clothing line



TASTEMAKERS

***All in
the Family***

Our 2022 New Southern Tastemakers are defined by an entrepreneurial spirit that, like heirloom silver and handwritten recipes, was lovingly passed down from one generation to the next. This year, we're celebrating three family businesses across the South that foster community

BY BETSY CRIBB

BUFF STRICKLAND

TEAM CAPTAINS

Lisa Caldwell and Lauren Caldwell Lea

CALDWELL COLLECTION
Kernersville, North Carolina,
and Houston, Texas
@caldwell.collection

Lisa Caldwell and Lauren Caldwell Lea come by their love of The University of North Carolina Tar Heels honestly. “Not only were Lauren and I both Carolina cheerleaders, but my husband and son were also football players there,” says Caldwell. “We bleed Carolina blue.” But the die-hard fans couldn’t find stylish clothes in their team’s shade, so they launched the Caldwell Collection, a line of flattering silhouettes in collegiate-friendly sky blue as well as red.

They also come by their love of fashion honestly. “I had two sisters who wore larger sizes back when stores did not sell plus-size clothes, so my mom and I made everything,” says Caldwell. Lea attributes her style savvy to her grandmother too. “My mom’s mom was a boutique owner in North Carolina in the 1980s,” she says. “I remember hiding underneath wedding gowns.... My mom and I have always had this background of creativity in fashion.”

The timing of the Caldwell Collection’s April 2020 debut wasn’t ideal, given that the coronavirus pandemic kept fans at home. Even so, Caldwell and Lea made the most of it, hosting virtual fashion shows to start building a fan base of their own. Now that stadiums are once again filled with people, they’re optimistic about growing their line to include more team colors. “Here in the South, game day is an experience,” says Lea. “It’s not just a football or basketball game. It’s an event, and you come dressed to the nines. It’s exciting for us to be a part of that.”

But for the mother-daughter duo, it’s about more than school spirit. “We’re really proud that we are a Black-owned, women-owned, family-owned business, which is incredibly rare,” says Lea. “We don’t take that lightly. We love to talk to other minority business owners, tell them our story, and offer any kind of support or advice whenever we can.”



(From left) Mariana “Mini” Hay Avant, Mariana Hay, Kathleen Hay Hagood, and Rhett Outten

LOWCOUNTRY GEMS

Mariana Hay, Rhett Outten, Kathleen Hay Hagood, and Mariana “Mini” Hay Avant

CROGHAN’S JEWEL BOX • Charleston, South Carolina • @croghans

Shops and restaurants tend to come and go on downtown Charleston’s King Street, but Croghan’s Jewel Box is as much a part of the topography as the palmetto trees and church steeples. Opened around 1907 in an 18th-century Single House, the shop is now run by the third and fourth generations of the Croghan family—sisters Mariana Hay and Rhett Outten and Hay’s daughters, Kathleen Hay Hagood and Mariana “Mini” Hay Avant. On her first day on the job, Hay learned Croghan’s approach to customer service. “My mom said, ‘Take these three bracelets to the back door of the hospital. Dr. So-and-So is operating, but he’ll come out and pick one. You’ll bring it back, wrap it, and then take it to him,’” she recalls, laughing.

Years later, this extra-mile mentality is still engraved in the Croghan’s ethos. They’re reaching the next generation, too, thanks to the Goldbug Collection, a cheeky line of affordable jewelry inspired by the palmetto bug

(in less pleasant terms, a cockroach) and developed by Avant and Hagood. “Instead of us being this staid, old jewelry store that was a bit intimidating, [the Goldbug Collection] brought young people who could come in and buy cockroach earrings,” says Hay.

They’ve also taken care to remain relevant in a changing retail landscape. When Outten moved back to Charleston in 2009, she set to work establishing the shop’s online presence. Now, their Instagram has around 44,000 followers from all over the country. “Social media puts you in touch with your people,” says Outten. “When COVID came around and we had to close the brick-and-mortar store, we still had a direct line to our customers, and that made all the difference.”

But for the Croghan’s crew, there’s no greater joy than someone coming into their King Street shop in search of a silver baby rattle or an engagement ring. “A lot of things change,” Outten says. “But a lot of things don’t.”

Andrea Pedraza (left) and her daughter Cindy Pedraza Puente in their chocolate shop



SWEET TALKERS

Andrea Pedraza and Cindy Pedraza Puente

COCOANDRÉ CHOCOLATIER
Dallas, Texas
@cocoandre_chocolatier

Andrea Pedraza and her daughter Cindy Pedraza Puente know better than most that dreams sometimes come true in unexpected ways. After losing their jobs during the Great Recession and with less than \$1,000 to invest, the pair took Andrea's 25 years of experience as a chocolatier and Cindy's business know-how and opened their own candy shop in the Oak Cliff neighborhood of Dallas.

Thirteen years later, CocoAndré

Chocolatier has become a destination for handcrafted truffles in globally inspired flavors like dulce de leche and Turkish coffee, dairy-free bars, and horchata. "The flavors come from my memories and my environment, what I see every day and what I grew up with," says Pedraza, who's originally from Mexico. "We have people who will buy a chocolate specifically because it reminds them of their grandmother or something that their mom made," says Puente.

Beyond churning out nostalgic sweets, their little white house turned chocolate shop and cafe has become a local gathering place. "Once a month,

we have a market to share this space with new businesses coming up [in the area]," says Pedraza. "Seeing all these families with their children shopping and looking around and drinking our horchata—it feels good."

It's this strong tie to their Oak Cliff community—and to each other—that makes CocoAndré so special, notes Puente. "To me, small businesses are the bread and butter of your neighborhood," she says. "They make you feel at home and know your name and who you are. When you're connecting with a small business, especially one that's women owned, you're not just supporting them but their whole family."