



Photo by L.A. Fotographeer

ANSWERED PRAYER LEADS TO CREATION OF CATERING BUSINESS

In prayer one day, **Shani Tinsley** asked, “Lord, what’s my gift?” And she heard Him say, “It’s in your hands.” Though she didn’t know what that meant at the time, today she completely understands.

“Cooking is not something that I just do,” she says. “It’s my ministry of bringing people together.” Tinsley is CEO of iCater Weddings & Events LLC, the Mobile Area Chamber’s Small Business of the Month.

With more than 25 years of cooking experience for family and friends, Tinsley found herself looking for a new career after losing her job when the store where she worked closed. Culinary school was her next step, graduating with honors from Auguste Escoffier School of Culinary Arts.

“It was time to turn my passion for whipping up homemade meals and hosting stylish events into something more, so iCater was born,” she says.

In just three years, the company has made significant strides, focusing on Southern catering with a gourmet flair. From weddings to corporate events to baby showers, iCater’s menus range from hors d’oeuvres like pulled pork bruschetta, crab and cheddar wontons and party wings, to meatloaf, beef tips and baked ham for sit-down meals. All of her menus focus on locally sourced ingredients wherever possible and are seasonal.

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“Most people make the incorrect assumption that Southern food means ordinary and boring,” she says. “But inside our bustling kitchen, our talented team of creators specialize in exceeding our clients’ expectations with our own unique flavor, style and taste, from melt-in-your-mouth prime rib to a mouth-watering leek and potato chilled soup.”

And if that didn’t keep her busy enough, she also provides cooking classes and offers personal chef services.

Tinsley says after joining the Chamber two years ago, she challenged herself to make business connections at various networking events, including the Growth Alliance Task Force – and it’s worked. She’s been able to add employees, achieve Better Business Bureau accreditation and become Tips Certified so she can serve alcohol at special events.



Photo by L.A. Photographie

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