

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Leah "Dookie" Chase

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Chase, Leah
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Leah "Dookie" Chase,
Dates:	November 15, 2002
Bulk Dates:	2002
Physical Description:	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:46:45).
Abstract:	Chef and restaurateur Leah "Dooky" Chase (1923 - 2019) is famous for her Creole-style cooking, and was proprietor of the Dooky Chase Restaurant in New Orleans. Chase was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 15, 2002, in New Orleans, Louisiana. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2002_199
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Leah Chase, "the Queen of Creole Cuisine," was born January 6, 1923, in New Orleans, Louisiana, of Catholic Creole parents. She was sent to New Orleans in 1937 to live with her aunt and to attend St. Mary's Academy for high school. Her first job out of school was at the Oriental Laundry in the French Quarter. A week later, Chase was hired by the Colonial Restaurant on Chartres Street. She has been in the restaurant industry ever since.

In 1945, she met and married musician Edgar "Dooky" Chase II, whose parents owned the Dooky Chase Restaurant. At first, Chase spent her time raising her children and sewing, but once the children were old enough to attend school she began to work at the restaurant three days a week. She changed the menu to serve hot meals at lunchtime to black men who were beginning to work in offices. She started out as a hostess, but she was soon redecorating the restaurant and working as chef. Because of Chase, the Dooky Chase Restaurant is known for its good food, antiques and original African American art.

Chase has received many awards both for her culinary genius and her community service including: the coveted *New Orleans Times Picayune* 1997 Loving Cup Award, the Weiss Award from the National Conference of Christians and Jews, the Torch of Liberty Award, the University of New Orleans Entrepreneurship Award, the Outstanding Woman Award from the National Council of Negro Women, and numerous honors from the NAACP. She serves on many organizational boards including the Arts Council of New Orleans, the New Orleans Museum of Art and the Urban League. Chase is a frequent guest on many of the televised cooking shows and was visiting culinary professor at Nichols State University in 1996. She has four children, sixteen grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Chase passed away on June 1, 2019.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Leah "Dookie" Chase was conducted by Larry Crowe on November 15, 2002, in New Orleans, Louisiana, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Chef and restaurateur Leah "Dooky" Chase (1923 - 2019) is famous for her Creole-style cooking, and was proprietor of the Dooky Chase Restaurant in New Orleans.

Restrictions

Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

Restrictions on Use

All use of materials and use credits must be pre-approved by The HistoryMakers®. Appropriate credit must be given. Copyright is held by The HistoryMakers®.

Related Material

Information about the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview, as well as correspondence with the interview subject is stored electronically both on The HistoryMakers® server and in two databases maintained by The HistoryMakers®, though this information is not included in this finding aid.

Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

Persons:

Chase, Leah

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Chase, Leah--Interviews

African American Women cooks--Interviews.

Restaurateurs--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Dooky Chase (Restaurant)

Occupations:

Chef

Restaurateur

HistoryMakers® Category:

BusinessMakers

Administrative Information

Custodial History

Interview footage was recorded by The HistoryMakers®. All rights to the interview have been transferred to The HistoryMakers® by the interview subject through a signed interview release form. Signed interview release forms have been deposited with Jenner & Block, LLP, Chicago.

Preferred Citation

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Leah "Dookie" Chase, November 15, 2002. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 5/30/2023 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

Other Finding Aid

A Microsoft Access contact database and a FileMaker Pro tracking database, both maintained by The HistoryMakers®, keep track of the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Leah "Dookie" Chase, Section A2002_199_001_001, TRT:

0:29:15 ?

Leah "Dookie" Chase was born on January 6, 1923 in New Orleans, Louisiana to Charles and Hortensia Lange. Her father was a shipyard worker in Madisonville, Louisiana who also farmed to supplement his income. Chase's mother worked in a garment factory sewing like many other Creole women at the time. Chase has limited knowledge of her family background because it was seldom. Although Chase is of Creole ancestry on her mother's side, Chase was forbidden from speaking patois as a child. Her parents had limited schooling, but they raised their fourteen children with a value for education. Chase describes the sights, smells, and sounds of growing up in Madisonville, Louisiana. She formed an early appreciation for working in a garden, feeding pigs, and foraging wild fruit.

African American Families—Louisiana.

Family Secrets.

Racially mixed children.

Creoles--Race identity--Louisiana--New Orleans.

African American fathers--Attitudes.

Country life—Louisiana--Madisonville.

Video Oral History Interview with Leah "Dookie" Chase, Section A2002_199_001_002, TRT: 0:29:30 ?

Leah "Dookie" Chase describes her childhood education. Her father, Charles Lange, was a devout Catholic who sent her to Catholic schools for religious training. Chase attended St. Francis Xavier Elementary School in Madisonville, Louisiana and St. Mary's Academy in New Orleans, Louisiana. Chase describes her childhood personality and her role models, including her parents. After graduating from high school at the age of sixteen, Chase spent two years as a domestic worker before moving to New Orleans to work as a waitress in the French Quarter. In New Orleans, Chase discovered her love for the restaurant industry. She met her husband, Edgar "Dooky" Chase, Jr., a jazz musician, in 1945. His parents owned the Sandwich Shop, which would later become Dooky Chase's Restaurant. After, Chase started working at the restaurant, she tried to replicate what she observed at white businesses in the French Quarter. However, her desire to implement changes in the restaurant's menu and décor were initially met by resistance from her mother-in-law, Emily Chase.

Catholic education--Louisiana.

Prejudices Religious aspects.

African American poor families.

Restaurants--Louisiana--New Orleans.

Restaurants--Decoration.

Video Oral History Interview with Leah "Dookie" Chase, Section A2002_199_001_003, TRT: 0:30:15 ?

Leah "Dookie" Chase describes the development of Dooky Chase's Restaurant in New Orleans, Louisiana. Chase's vision for the restaurant was a source of tension with her mother-in-law, Emily Chase, but the two were able to maintain a loving relationship. Chase has amassed a large collection of African American artwork at Dooky Chase's. She describes her husband's initial opposition to the artwork as well as the artists on display including Bruce Brice, Jacob Lawrence, Jonathan T. Biggers, Clifton Webb, and Lois Mailou Jones. The works of HistoryMakers Elizabeth Catlett, Jonathan Green, David Driskell, and William Pajaud are also featured at the restaurant. Chase talks about her cooking style,

popular menu items, and the chef community in New Orleans. She also talks about the challenge of running a restaurant. During The Civil Rights movement, Dooky Chase's Restaurant was a meeting place for organizations like SNCC and Core. Oretha Castle Haley, James Baldwin, Thurgood Marshall, and Dutch Morial, the first African-American mayor have all dined in the restaurant.

Restaurant management.

Parents-in-law.

African American artists.

Cooking, Creole.

Civil rights movements--Louisiana--New Orleans--History--20th century.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

African American mayors--Louisiana--New Orleans.

Video Oral History Interview with Leah "Dookie" Chase, Section A2002_199_001_004, TRT: 0:17:45 ?

Leah "Dookie" Chase highlights significant honors and awards she has received over the years including the NAACP A.P. Tureaud Medal from the NAACP, the New Orleans Times-Picayune 1997 Loving Cup Award, and the Ella Brennan Savoir Faire Award. She describes her hopes and concerns for the African American community. Chase also reflects upon her legacy and how she would like to be remembered.

Leadership for the common good.

Tureaud, Alexander P., 1936-