

2019 Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 295

BY REPRESENTATIVES DUPLESSIS, ABRAMSON, BAGNERIS, BOUIE, GARY
CARTER, CONNICK, GAROFALO, JIMMY HARRIS, HILFERTY, LEGER, AND
LEOPOLD

CONDOLENCES: Expresses condolences on the death of Leah Chase, executive chef and
co-owner of Dooky Chase's Restaurant in New Orleans

1 A RESOLUTION

2 To express sincere and heartfelt condolences upon the death of Leah Chase, executive chef
3 and co-owner of Dooky Chase's Restaurant in New Orleans.

4 WHEREAS, it was with deep regret and profound sorrow that the members of the
5 Louisiana House of Representatives learned of the passing of Leah Chase on June 1, 2019,
6 at the age of ninety-six; and

7 WHEREAS, lovingly referred to as the "Queen of Creole Cuisine", Leah Chase, a
8 Louisiana native and chef and co-owner of the nationally known Dooky Chase's, began her
9 career in the restaurant industry as a waitress at a French Quarter restaurant, where she
10 developed an appreciation for food; and

11 WHEREAS, shortly after marrying Edgar "Dooky" Chase, Jr., in 1946, Mrs. Chase
12 took command of the kitchen in the restaurant that her in-laws had opened in 1941 as a po-
13 boy shop; she helped to transform it into a white-tablecloth, destination restaurant; it was the
14 only establishment of its caliber where African Americans could eat in a legally segregated
15 city; and

16 WHEREAS, at a time when many doors were closed for African Americans, Dooky
17 Chase's was always open; it was a safe space and a welcoming environment; by the 1950s,
18 it became a meeting place for activists and civic leaders, both black and white, despite the
19 fact that it was illegal for blacks and whites to eat in restaurants together; Leah Chase fed

1 the Freedom Riders and hosted meetings for the National Association for the Advancement
2 of Colored People (NAACP); and

3 WHEREAS, the haven she provided and the contributions she made were vital but
4 were not without consequences, as Dooky and Leah received threatening notes and their
5 restaurant was even bombed once; even after segregation laws were overturned, the Chase
6 family's restaurant served as a neutral ground; and

7 WHEREAS, Mrs. Chase authored a hearty collection of cookbooks, *The Dooky*
8 *Chase Cookbook*, *And Still I Cook*, and *Down Home Health: Family Recipes of Black*
9 *American Chefs*, and contributed to *The Princess and the Frog: Tiana's Cookbook: Recipes*
10 *for Kids*; Mrs. Chase was the inspiration for the first black Disney princess, Princess Tiana,
11 in the 2009 film "The Princess and The Frog", about a waitress in Louisiana who dreams of
12 becoming a restaurant owner; and

13 WHEREAS, Leah Chase fed Quincy Jones, Jesse Jackson, Duke Ellington, Thurgood
14 Marshall, James Baldwin, Ray Charles, President George W. Bush, and then-U.S. Senator
15 and presidential hopeful Barack Obama, who she reprimanded for adding hot sauce to her
16 famous gumbo before tasting it; and

17 WHEREAS, Mrs. Chase was a major supporter of cultural and visual arts; she
18 cultivated a renowned collection of African American art in her dining rooms; although the
19 restaurant flooded in Hurricane Katrina, one of the Chases' grandsons saved the art
20 collection, and it was reinstalled in time for the restaurant's reopening in 2007; and

21 WHEREAS, in 2012, the Chases formed the Edgar "Dooky" Jr. & Leah Chase
22 Family Foundation to support community groups; the foundation seeks to cultivate and
23 support organizations that work for the cultural arts, education, culinary arts, and social
24 justice; and

25 WHEREAS, in 2016, Leah Chase was honored by the New Orleans section of the
26 National Council of Negro Women for achievements, such as being a nationally recognized
27 culinary expert, a community activist, a lifetime board member of the New Orleans Museum
28 of Art, and a former board member of the New Orleans Symphony, the New Orleans Ballet,
29 the Urban League of Greater New Orleans, the Greater New Orleans Foundation, and the
30 Coalition of 100 Black Women; and

1 WHEREAS, Leah Chase was the recipient of numerous notable honors and awards,
2 including the 1984 Candace Award granted by the Coalition of 100 Black Women, the 1985
3 Freedom Foundation Award, the 1986 Women in the Fore-Front Award, the 1987 Young
4 Leadership Council Role Model Award, the 1988 Beautiful Activist Award, the 1989 Anti-
5 Defamation League Torch of Liberty Award, the 1990 Human Understanding Award, the
6 1991 A. P. Tureaud Award of the NAACP, the 1992 Weiss Award of the National
7 Conference of Christians and Jews, the 1997 *Times-Picayune* Loving Cup Award, a 2000
8 Lifetime Achievement Award from the Southern Foodways Alliance, and the 2016 James
9 Beard Lifetime Achievement Award; she received honorary degrees from Dillard University,
10 Johnson & Wales University, Loyola University New Orleans, Madonna College, Our Lady
11 of Holy Cross College, and Tulane University; and

12 WHEREAS, Leah Chase was preceded in death by her husband of seventy years,
13 Edgar "Dooky" Chase, Jr., and daughter, Emily Haydel; she is survived by her daughters,
14 Stella Reese Chase and Leah Chase Kamata; son, Edgar "Dooky" Chase, III; sixteen
15 grandchildren; and twenty-eight great-grandchildren; and

16 WHEREAS, Leah Chase was a culinary legend and an unwavering advocate for civil
17 rights and full inclusion of all; she was a proud entrepreneur, a believer in the spirit of New
18 Orleans and the good will of all people, and an extraordinary woman of faith.

19 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Representatives of the
20 Legislature of Louisiana does hereby express sincere and heartfelt condolences upon the
21 death of Leah Chase, executive chef and co-owner of Dooky Chase's Restaurant in New
22 Orleans; does hereby recognize and record for posterity her outstanding achievements and
23 singular contributions in the culinary field, in the advancement of civil rights, and in life; and
24 does hereby extend true appreciation for her enduring legacy that will forever be a source
25 of deep pride and honor for her family, her friends, the staff and patrons of Dooky Chase's
26 Restaurant, the city of New Orleans, and the state of Louisiana.

27 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the
28 family of Leah Chase.

DIGEST

The digest printed below was prepared by House Legislative Services. It constitutes no part of the legislative instrument. The keyword, one-liner, abstract, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

HR 295 Original

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Duplessis

Expresses the condolences of the House on the death of Leah Chase, executive chef and co-owner of Dooky Chase's Restaurant in New Orleans.