

Keeping Design Inspiration Close to Home

Two AIFD florists bring local and domestic blooms to their South Dakota workshop.

Photos by Kristen Heismeyer, Bricks Photography



The Green Palace Event Barn, Chamberlain, S.D.

Patience Pickner, AIFD, PFCI, SDCF, and Ace Berry, AIFD, PFCI, TMF, are co-creators of **Inspired Design**, which presents education and design programs, often taught in partnership with wholesale florists or for professional florists associations. This past August, the two produced their first retreat-style workshop, held at **The Green Palace**, a wedding and event venue in Chamberlain, S.D., located close to **The Picket Fence**, Pickner's floral and home décor store.

Called **Inspired Design Retreat**, the three-day session had two main goals: to provide participants with a library of social-media-ready images from a series of styled shoots and to source local, regional and domestic botanicals for the entire workshop.

Pickner and Berry, who owns **Fulshear Floral Design** in Fulshear, Texas, formed Inspired Design as a teaching partnership about eight years ago. They created educational content for **North American Wholesale Florist**, based in Sioux Falls, S.D., as well as classroom offerings on everything from sympathy and wedding florals to preparing for certification or competition.

As a three-day floral retreat, the new event gave participants an opportunity to "design for the soul, for the art of it and the love of it," Pickner explains. "But the big part was featuring all locally grown and American-grown flowers. There are so many benefits, including supporting your local economy and cutting down a bit on your carbon footprint. Perhaps no one can do it all locally grown, but each of us can do a little more. As we discussed this idea, even people who don't think about it much started to feel good about this element of the workshop."

Tapping into South Dakota's agricultural roots helped her make the connection with locally grown flowers, she explains.

"Farm-to-table is a big movement in our state, and I wanted to carry that through with the floral part of it. There's something really cool about designing with locally grown flowers."

Both Pickner and Berry have sourced from small-scale flower farms in their areas, and their experience influenced the retreat curriculum. For example, "There are many varieties, including *Zinnia*, *Dahlia* and even *Anemone*, that don't ship well," Pickner says.

In the Fulshear area outside Houston, where Berry is based, he procures Texas-grown *Dahlia*, *Anemone*, *Ranunculus*, *Celosia* and *Zinnia* from **Vintage Farming Co.** "I try to do everything I can to leave my money in my community," Berry says. "These are the same people who are going to keep me around for the next 50 years, so I'm going to support them."

These messages came through during the Aug. 8-10 retreat, as 17 participants from across the region were given free rein to create with flowers from South Dakota farms, from **Len Busch Roses** in Minnesota, and with donations from California and Florida flower growers.

One of the highlights for participants was taking a breakfast-and-mimosa cruise on the Missouri River before reaching a riverside destination where photographers, models and flowers awaited. "Participants knew nothing at this point, but we split them into five groups and said, 'Here are your flowers and models. You have two hours to design whatever you want,'" Pickner recalls. "We had so much fun, and the models were amazing. They were willing to pose in the water, on the muddy riverbank and in the marshy area, so the teams actually had an opportunity to direct their styled shoots."

For the second day, the session moved to **The Green Palace**, a century-old restored barn where participants designed event-style installations, including tabletop and wall



ABOVE: All of the workshop participants collaborated on the moongate florals. Bouquet by Jackie Reiter Vorlicek, Prairie Home; Model: Jamie Ferrie.

THIS PHOTO: Florals designed by Dawn Mensch-Walz, Vintage Vault; Model: Bailey Mayer.

RIGHT: Tabletop arrangement designed by Julie Wurr, Heart & Home.



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décor, and later reviewed pricing formulas with Pickner and Berry.

The workshop culminated with a floral fashion show and farm-to-table dinner that attracted 150 guests, including customers of the Picket Fence and members of the community. The meal featured locally sourced beef and a menu of local produce, dessert and wine. "People are still asking when we are going to do this again," Pickner says. "But what's most gratifying is when they say, 'I didn't know you could do that kind of thing with flowers.'"

Tammy Krein, owner of Ken's Flower Shop in Bismarck, N.D., came to the workshop wanting "to think outside the box and create more unique floral pieces," as part of her preparation for becoming an AIFD Certified Floral Designer.

"Being from North Dakota, we do not have as many opportunities to buy locally as in other states, so the ability to work with all American-grown product was huge," she says. "I have been using some of the domestic sources already, but I've since been adding to them after seeing more of what is available. I've also found someone in nearby Bismarck who is starting a flower farm, so I'm hoping to continue working with local flower farms in my area."

Pickner and Berry are already planning for the next Inspired Design Retreat, which will take place March 30-April 1, 2020, at High Pointe Estate in Liberty Hill, Texas, outside Austin. ■

DETAILS

Inspired Design Retreat: inspiredesign.info, @inspiredesign.info

Sponsors: Accent Décor, Arctic Alaska Peonies, CalFlowers, Design Master, Floral Greens Farmers of Florida, Len Busch Roses, Smithers-Oasis and The Green Palace.

