

ACADEMY CONNECTION



March 2026



Dear Fellows and Members,

As we welcome 2026, there is a renewed sense of energy and optimism throughout the American Academy of Chefs. While much of the country has faced a challenging winter, especially our colleagues in the Northeast battling record cold, snow, and relentless storms, our spirit remains strong. Chefs are nothing if not resilient. Whether navigating harsh weather, staffing shortages, or the ever-evolving demands of our industry, we continue to lead with professionalism, passion, and purpose.

One of the highlights of these early months was the opportunity to meet with our Vice Chair, Chef Reimund D. Pitz, CEC, CCE, AAC, HOF, and the AAC Committee to thoughtfully review and select the 2026 Class of Fellows. This process is always both inspiring and humbling as we recognize chefs whose careers exemplify excellence, leadership, mentorship, and service to our profession.

We look forward to formally honoring and inducting the new class at our upcoming national convention in Grand Rapids. Their dedication represents the very best of our Academy, and we are proud to welcome them into our distinguished fellowship.

In January, I had the distinct honor of attending the Academy Dinner in Fort Worth, where we celebrated our AAC Central Region Director, Chef Patrick D. Mitchell, CEC, AAC, as he received the AAC Lifetime Achievement Award. This recognition is a testament to his unwavering commitment to culinary excellence, education, and service.

Congratulations to Chef Mitchell on this well-deserved honor. His leadership continues to inspire chefs across the country.

I also had the opportunity to visit the site of our Annual Induction Dinner and Meeting, scheduled for Tuesday, June 30, 2026, at the beautiful Amway Grand Plaza Hotel. The venue promises an exceptional setting for what will be a memorable evening of celebration and fellowship.



In addition to our Academy events, I am looking forward to the exciting convention programming being organized by President René J. Marquis, CEC, CCE, CCA, AAC, and his dedicated team. Their efforts will ensure an engaging and meaningful experience for all who attend.

Convention registration is now open. I strongly encourage everyone to register early and secure hotel accommodation as soon as possible to guarantee your place at this important gathering. Tickets for the AAC Annual Induction Dinner are available through the [convention website](#).

Please note that attendance for this prestigious evening will be limited to 250 guests to ensure an intimate and memorable experience. Priority registration will be given to Fellows and their guest(s) before opening any remaining seats to the general membership. We encourage you to secure your tickets early to participate in what promises to be a very special celebration of excellence, fellowship, and the induction of our 2026 Class.

A Reminder Regarding AAC Induction Announcements,

To be clear: individuals are not Fellows of the AAC until they have been formally inducted. Therefore, prospective candidates should not announce induction on social media, permit employers to do so, or use “AAC” after their names before the ceremony has taken place.

The induction process exists for a reason. It reflects the standards, traditions, and integrity that have made the American Academy of Chefs the honor society of the American Culinary Federation. Respecting that process is not optional, it is part of the professionalism we expect of those seeking this distinction.

We ask chapter leaders and sponsors to ensure this expectation is clearly communicated to all prospective candidates moving forward. Protecting the prestige of the AAC is a shared responsibility. Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your continued leadership.

As we move forward into this promising new year, I am reminded of the strength and unity of our culinary community. Thank you for your continued financial support, commitment to excellence, mentorship, and dedication to advancing our profession.

We are deeply grateful to all our Fellows and others for their generous donations in support of the Academy. Your contributions sustain our mission and help ensure that the standards, traditions, and fellowship of the AAC continue to thrive for future generations. For those who have not yet contributed, we encourage you to consider supporting the mission of the Academy. Donations, as many as you choose to make in any given year are welcome at any time. On behalf of the entire Academy family, thank you again for your generosity and commitment.

I look forward to seeing each of you in Grand Rapids this June.

With Warm Regards,



Joe G. Aiello, CEC, AAC, HOF
Chair, American Academy of Chefs

2026 American Academy of Chefs Candidates

We are Proud to Present our 2026 Tentative American Academy of Chefs

Candidates for Inductions:

R. Andrew Chlebana, CMPC, CCA

ACF Chicago Chefs

Lance S. Cook, CEC, CCA

ACF Triad Chapter, NC, Inc.

Aaron R. Guerra, CEC

National Member

Jason D. Hall, CMC

ACF Raleigh-Durham Area Chef's Assn.

Marvin Herrera, CEC

ACF Augusta Chapter

Derek J. Ivancic, CEC, CCA

ACF Cleveland Chapter Inc

Todd Leonard, CEC

ACF Beehive Chefs Chapter Inc

Gary A. Marquardt, CEC

ACF Greater Grand Rapids Chefs Association

Joshua L. Martin, CEC, CCE

ACF Chefs de Cuisine of the Inland Northwest

Brian T. Mattice, CEC, CCA, CCE

ACF Professional Chefs / Cooks Assn of Rochester

Amanda N. Miller, CEPC

ACF West Michigan Lakeshore Chapter

Kevin L. Penn, CEC, CCA

ACF Michigan Chefs de Cuisine Association

Andrew Sayes, CMC

ACF Michigan Chefs de Cuisine Association

Julie Selonke, CEC

ACF Michigan Chefs de Cuisine Association

Samantha Slechta, CEC

ACF Sarasota Bay Chefs Association

Dean C. Sprague, CEC

Texas Chefs Association

Timothy S. Wright, CEC

ACF Cleveland Chapter Inc

Walter S. Zuromski, CEC, CCE

ACF Sarasota Bay Chefs Association

2026 Honorary American Academy of Chefs- Tentative Inductees

Nazim Khan, CEC

ACF Tampa Bay Culinary Association, Inc.

Omar Martinez

ACF Chicago Chefs

William D. Paul

ACF Tampa Bay Culinary Association, Inc.

Tracy B. Tobin

ACF Chicago Chefs

Carmelo Vadacchino

National Member

Be on the lookout for the next AAC Connections Newsletter to view the announcement of the 2026 Hall of Fame Inductees and AAC Award Recipients.

ACF Southeast Regional Education Symposium and AAC Dinner

Join us on March 29, 2026 at 8:00 AM- 4:15 PM at the Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest North Carolina for a day filled with learning and networking. Get ready to connect with educators from across the region and gain valuable insights to enhanced your teaching skills. Don't miss out on this opportunity to grow both personally and professionally.

AAC members are also invited to attend the special American Academy of Chefs Dinner at Forsyth Country Club taking place following the Southeast Regional Education Symposium.

American Academy of Chefs Dinner at Forsyth Country Club

3101 Country Club Rd, Winston Salem, NC 27104

6:00 PM Reception, 7:00 PM Dinner

(separate ticket required)

REGISTER

American Academy of Chefs
Lifetime Achievement Award Dinner

JAN BANDULA

CMPC, CCE, AAC, Emeritus

Saturday April 18th • 6pm

Baltimore Country Club • Five Farms

11500 Mays Chapel Road

Lutherville, MD 21093

\$175 per person

Cocktail attire requested



Tax-Deductible Donations

(December 1, 2025- February 28, 2026)

Joe G. Aiello CEC, AAC, HOF
Joseph Alfano CEC, AAC
Nello L. Allegrucci CEC, AAC
Ronald Andrews CEC, AAC
Alfredo Arroyo CEC, AAC
Denise D. Baxter CCE, AAC
David S. Bearl CCC, CCE, AAC

Thomas J. Long CEC, AAC
Jose L. Luna CEC, AAC
Thomas J. Macrina CEC CCA AAC HOF
HBOT
Costa Magoulas CEC, CCE, CCA, AAC
Orlin Marcus CEC, AAC
Jay Marshall CEC, AAC

Michael J. Beriau CEC, AAC
John E. Bogacki CEC, CCE, AAC
Michael P. Bologna CEC, CCE, AAC
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Denise S. Graffeo CEC, AAC, HOF
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Edward J. Hennessy CEC, AAC
Uwe Hestnar CEC, AAC
Raimund W. Hofmeister CMC, AAC
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Manfred Sander CEC, AAC
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Donations, as many as you choose to make in any given year, are welcome at any time. On behalf of the entire Academy family, we thank you again for your generous support. Donations may be made by check mailed directly to the Academy Office, online, or via credit card. Please contact the Academy Administrator at academy@acfcchefs.org if you have any questions.

THANK YOU to all of our 2026 Donors!

DONATE NOW

We Would Love to Hear from You!

We would like to hear what great things our Academy Fellows are doing. Email Karen Stamper at kstamper@acfcchefs.org with events, pictures, and acknowledgements about AAC Fellows and we will post in the monthly Academy Connection.

2025 AAC Sponsors

We would like to thank our sponsors for their continued support of the American Academy of Chefs and their mission.

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Through the Academy Connection e-newsletter, the American Academy of Chefs provides members with news and information on products and services offered by the AAC®, its partners and American Culinary Federation.

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