

ACADEMY CONNECTION



June 2026



Dear Fellows of the Academy,

I recently had the honor of attending the 41st Worldchefs Congress & Expo 2026 at ICC Wales and the Celtic Manor Resort in Newport, Wales, United Kingdom. The event brought together culinary professionals from around the world to celebrate excellence, innovation, and the future of our profession.

I would like to extend my congratulations to the ACF chefs and teams who represent our organization in international competition. The American Academy of Chefs was proud to support several of these competitors through professional grants that helped offset their participation expenses. Your commitment, skill, and professionalism continue to elevate the reputation of our industry and inspire the next generation of culinary professionals.

A special congratulations to Chef Michael J. Stamets, CEC, AAC, who showcased his talents during the Global Vegan Chefs Challenge, Chef Derek R. Mazzocoli showcased his talents during the Global Chefs Challenge and Chef Yeishalee Santana showcased her talents during the Global Young Chefs Challenge. Congratulations to all for representing the ACF with distinction on the international stage. I would also like to recognize our AAC Vice Chair, Chef Reimund Pitz, CEC, CCE, AAC, HOF, for his dedication and significant contribution as an International Certified Judge at this world-class competition. His commitment and professionalism exemplify the high standards and excellence of our organization.

Congratulations also to Team Italia for capturing the Professional Chef Category title at the Worldchefs Global Chefs Challenge. Their passion, talent, and dedication to culinary excellence exemplify the highest standards of our profession and serve as an inspiration to chefs around the world.

Another proud moment during the Congress was the presentation of the Worldchefs Honorary Lifetime Membership Award to Chef Thomas J. Macrina, CEC, CCA, AAC, HOF, HBOT, and Chef Vanessa Marquis, CEC, AAC. This prestigious recognition honors their exceptional

contributions to the global culinary profession. Notably, Chef Vanessa Marquis became the first American woman to receive this distinguished honor. Congratulations to both recipients on this remarkable achievement.





Later in the month several members of the AAC Board and I also had the pleasure of attending the Canadian Culinary Federation Honour Society Induction Dinner at Langdon Hall in Cambridge, Ontario, Canada. It was an extraordinary evening celebrating leadership, service, and achievement within the culinary community.

A special congratulations goes to ACF Central Region Vice President Chef James F. Kokenyesdi, CEC, CCA, AAC, on his induction into the Canadian Federation Honour Society. This recognition is a well-deserved tribute to his many contributions to the culinary profession and his unwavering dedication to our industry.

I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to Canadian Federation Honour Society Chair Chef Vincenzo Del Duca, CEC, HAAC, for presenting such an elegant and memorable event. Special thanks as well to Executive Chef Jason Bangerter, his culinary brigade, and the entire service team for delivering an evening of exceptional cuisine and outstanding hospitality.

Congratulations to Chef Ryan Marquis, HAAC, on the successful completion of his six-year term as National President of the Canadian Culinary Federation. His leadership, dedication, and service have made a lasting impact on the organization and the culinary profession. We wish him continued success in his future endeavors.

During the 2026 Culinary Federation Conference in the Waterloo Region of Ontario, the President's Reception and Dinner featured an elegant five-course menu showcasing the remarkable talents of the Canada Community Catering culinary team, Culinary Team Canada, and Junior Culinary Team Canada. Their professionalism and creativity reflected the strength and excellence of Canada's culinary community.



Closer to home, we are in the final stages of planning the annual American Academy of Chefs Induction Meeting and Gala Dinner at the Amway Grand Hotel in Grand Rapids, Michigan. I look forward to welcoming and inducting the 2026 Fellows Class and presenting AAC awards to several deserving recipients whose contributions have strengthened both our profession and our Academy.

I am pleased to share that the Gala Dinner is officially sold out. Thank you to everyone who has supported this event. Your enthusiasm and commitment continue to strengthen the Academy and its mission. To our sponsors, thank you for your generous support and partnership. Your dedication plays a vital role in the continued success of the AAC and the programs we provide.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the ACF National Convention and the AAC Induction Meeting and Gala Dinner.

Respectfully,



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

AAC Events at the ACF National Convention

Tickets for the Annual Spouses Luncheon are now on sale! AAC chefs who missed the chance to grab tickets for the sold out American Academy of Chefs Induction Reception and Dinner can join the waiting list.

American Academy of Chefs Spouses Luncheon

Location: Grand Rapids Convention Center

Wednesday, July 1, 2026

12:00pm – 2:00pm

\$70.00 per ticket

American Academy of Chefs Induction Dinner- SOLD OUT

Please reach out to [Karen Stamper](#) if you would like to be added to the waiting list.

Location: Amway Grand Plaza

Tuesday, June 30, 2026

6:00pm – 10:00pm

\$300.00 per ticket

Formal attire is requested.

Tickets are available to AAC Fellows Only.
Seating is limited. There will be no on-site ticket sales.

PURCHASE TICKETS

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 Vadicchino

National Member

2026 American Academy of Chefs Hall of Fame

**We are Proud to Present our 2026 American Academy of Chefs Hall of Fame
Candidates for Induction:**

Jan Bandula, CMPC, CCE, AAC

ACF Greater Baltimore Chapter Inc.

Patrick D. Mitchell, CEC, AAC

Texas Chefs Association

Vincent J. Alberici, CEC, AAC

ACF Philadelphia Delaware Valley Chefs Association

Honorary Hall of Fame

O. Sigfried Krauss, CEC, AAC

ACF Pikes Peak Chapter, Inc.

Posthumous Hall of Fame

J. Daniel Knerr, CEC, AAC

ACF Rhode Island Chapter

Robert A. Milam, CEC, AAC

ACF West Virginia Chapter

2026 American Academy of Chefs Award Recipients

AAC Chair's Medal

Alan L. Romano, CEC, CCE, AAC

Lawrence A. Conti, CEC, AAC, HOF, Chair's Achievement Award

George A. O'Palenick, CEC, CCE, AAC, HOF

Joseph Amendola Award

Lisa M. Ransey ,CEC, CEPC, AAC

Lt. General John D. McLaughlin Award

CW5 Shane Rich

Chef Good Taste Award

Christopher Desens, CEC, CCA, AAC

Sharing Culinary Traditions Award

Keith A. Coughenour, CEC, AAC

Celebrity Chef

Gwendolyn Rogers

Legends Award

Ferdinand E. Metz, CMC, AAC, HOF, HBOT

Fritz H. Sonnenschmidt, CMC, AAC, HOF



2027 American Academy of Chefs Applications

Membership - Connection - Involvement

The "Prestigious Honor Society" of the American Culinary Federation offers a unique way to honor those who have worked hard and risen through the ranks of the culinary field. A successful application for acceptance as an AAC Fellow will serve as the culmination of years of involvement in the great culinary profession, and as an ACF member.

An Academy Fellow must request an application for a potential inductee. Candidates will need two sponsor letters of recommendation from voting Academy Fellows. An Academy Fellow is permitted to sponsor one new applicant per year, as is a Regional Director.

Applications must be returned by December 1st, 2026. Induction will be at the 2027 ACF National Convention.

Applications for American Academy of Chefs Induction for 2027 are now available. You can review the current requirements on how to become an American Academy of Chefs Fellow on the ACF Website.

[VIEW REQUIREMENTS](#)



2027 Hall of Fame

"The Culinary Hall of Fame was unanimously accepted by the Academy members. Its concept is to honor those men and women who, because of their outstanding attributes, have won the respect and love of their professional guild. Therefore, they are so honored by their

peers as a positive reflection to all those in this profession who seek achievement!" —
Hermann G. Rusch

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REQUEST APPLICATION

Tax-Deductible Donations

(May 1 - May 31, 2026)

Mark G. Wright, CEC, AAC, HOF, HBOT

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@acfchefs.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@acfchefs.org with events, pictures, and acknowledgements about AAC Fellows and we will post in the monthly Academy Connection.

2026 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.

American Culinary Federation

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