

ACADEMY CONNECTION



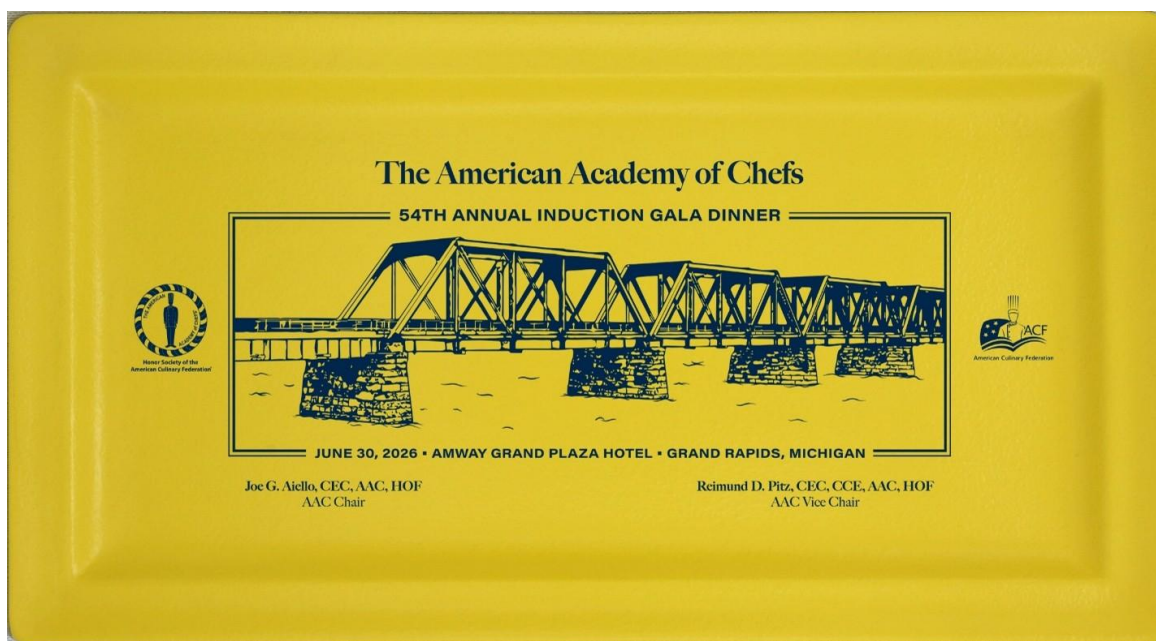
July 2026



Dear Fellows of the Academy,

Excitement is building as we are preparing to gather for the 54th Annual AAC Induction Gala Dinner at the beautiful Amway Grand Plaza Hotel. This extraordinary evening is a celebration of excellence, leadership, and the enduring spirit of our Academy.

We are honored to have Executive Chef Ricky Lund serve as our host for the evening. With passion and creativity, Chef Lund has designed a remarkable reception and dinner that will showcase his culinary artistry alongside the talents of his outstanding team. A proud Michigan native, Chef Lund is celebrated for his dedication to seasonal, locally sourced ingredients and for the meaningful partnerships he cultivates with regional farmers, purveyors, and our valued AAC sponsors. Together, they will create a dining experience that reflects not only innovation, but the power of collaboration and community.



Chef Lund will also host our annual Spouse's Luncheon in the historic Gerald R. and Betty Ford Presidential Ballroom. In this elegant and inspiring setting, guests will enjoy a beautifully prepared meal while celebrating the rich legacy of President Gerald R. Ford and First Lady Betty Ford. It promises to be a memorable and meaningful gathering.

Tickets for this unforgettable luncheon are still available. We encourage you to join us as we honor achievement, fellowship, and the continued growth of our Academy.



We also proudly celebrate the outstanding accomplishments of the ACF chefs and teams who represented our organization at the 41st Worldchefs Congress & Expo 2026. Their participation on the global stage reflects the strength, talent, and professionalism of our culinary community.

A particularly inspiring highlight of the Congress was the presentation of the Worldchefs Presidential Medallion to our own ACF Northeast Vice President, Chef Ray McCue, CEC, AAC. This distinguished honor recognizes his years of unwavering dedication, leadership, and service to the culinary profession and to chefs around the world. Chef McCue's achievement is a testament to the values we uphold and the impact we strive to make. Congratulations on this extraordinary and well-deserved recognition!



As we look ahead to the convention, attendees can anticipate engaging educational sessions, world-class culinary demonstrations, dynamic networking opportunities, and industry showcases that will inspire innovation and strengthen professional connections. It will be a time to learn, celebrate, and elevate our craft together.

This year's convention promises to be an unforgettable experience, packed with energy, excitement, and world-class culinary events! Kicking off the action on Monday, June 29, is the highly anticipated Live Fire Event at Rosa Parks Circle, where chefs will showcase their skills in a dynamic outdoor cooking experience. Also taking place that day, the ACF Competitions on the Tradeshow Floor will feature some of the industry's most talented culinarians competing at the highest level.

The excitement continues throughout the convention and culminates on Wednesday, July 1, with the elegant President's Gala, a premier celebration of our profession, our achievements, and the friendships that make ACF so special. This signature event is the perfect way to close out an incredible convention and is truly an occasion not to be missed!

On behalf of the entire AAC Team, we wish you safe travels, meaningful connections, and a summer filled with continued success and inspiration.

With pride and appreciation,



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

AAC Events at the ACF National Convention

The AAC is now inviting all ACF National Convention Attendee Spouses and Significant Others to the Annual AAC Spouses Luncheon, you can purchase tickets for this event below.

The AAC Induction Dinner is sold out. Thank you to all of the AAC Chefs who registered for the AAC Dinner as we honor this year's inductees.

American Academy of Chefs Spouses Luncheon

NOW OPEN TO ALL EVENT ATTENDEE SPOUSES/SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

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

Location: Amway Grand Plaza

Tuesday, June 30, 2026

6:00pm – 10:00pm

Formal attire is requested.

PURCHASE TICKETS TO SPOUSES LUNCHEON

*Nominations for AAC Chair and Vice Chair will open during the AAC Fellows Meeting
Tuesday, June 30*

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

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

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.

2026 AAC Sponsors

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



YOUR SOURCE FOR FINE DINING
ALLEN BROTHERS
THE GREAT STEAKHOUSE STEAKS®



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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