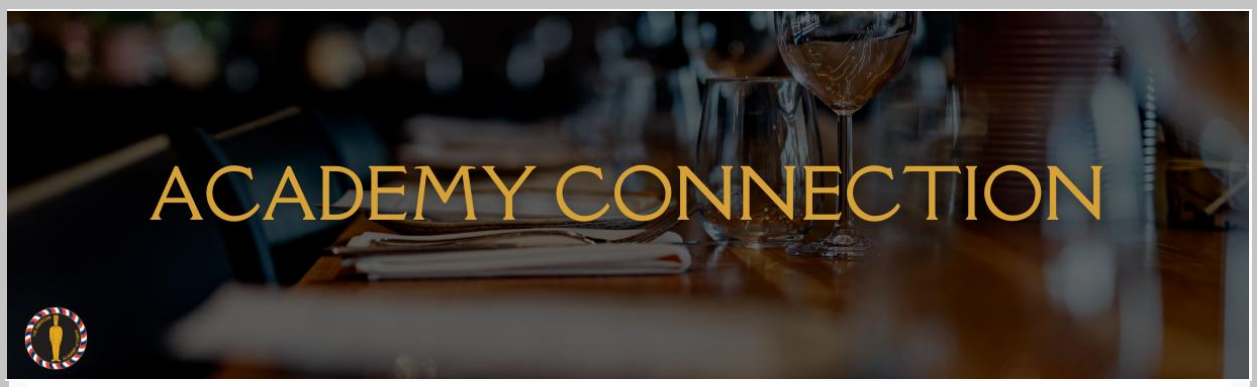


November 2026



Dear Fellows of the Academy,

This past month, we had the pleasure of celebrating Chef Milos J. Cihelka, CMC, AAC and recognizing his outstanding contributions and unwavering dedication to our culinary profession as he received the prestigious American Academy of Chefs Legend Award.

This special celebration in Michigan provided an opportunity to honor Chef Milos's accomplishments and recognize the lasting impact that dedicated culinary professionals make on our industry. The AAC Legend Award represents the respect, admiration, and appreciation of our profession for individuals whose careers exemplify the highest standards of culinary excellence, professionalism, leadership, and service.

Although I sincerely regret that I was unable to attend the celebration personally to present Chef Milos with this distinguished award, it was an honor to recognize his accomplishments on behalf of the American Academy of Chefs. Please join me in extending heartfelt congratulations to Chef Milos on this well deserved recognition.

I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to all the chefs who attended and supported this special occasion. Your presence reflects the fellowship, camaraderie, and shared commitment that make our ACF and AAC communities so strong.

A special thank you goes to Chef Jim Churches, CEC, CCA, AAC, AAC Central Regional Director, and Chef René J. Marquis, CEC, CCE, CCA, AAC, ACF National President, for their presence and support in making this recognition a memorable occasion. I also wish to acknowledge the chefs who joined in celebrating this important milestone: Chef Paula I. Recinella, HAAC, Chef Melissa B. Trimmer, CEPC, AAC, Chef James F. Kokenyesdi, CEC, CCA, AAC, Chef Julie Selonke, CEC, AAC, Chef Joseph Decker, CMPC, HAAC, Chef John D. McCormack, CEC, CCE, AAC, Chef Kevin M. Enright, CEC, CCE, AAC and Chef Steve Allen.

The American Academy of Chefs takes great pride in honoring individuals whose achievements, leadership, mentorship, and dedication have helped advance our profession. Celebrating our culinary legends reminds us of the importance of preserving our traditions, supporting our colleagues, inspiring the next generation of culinarians, and continually elevating the standards of our industry.

On behalf of the American Academy of Chefs, congratulations once again to Chef Milos. May this distinguished honor serve as a lasting tribute to your remarkable accomplishments and the positive influence you have had on our culinary community.





On October 22, 2026, it was a tremendous honor to represent the American Academy of Chefs as its Chairman at the World Gourmet Awards 2026 Ceremony in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

I was deeply honored to receive the President’s Award, recognizing the American Academy of Chefs as the distinguished Honor Society of the American Culinary Federation and acknowledging its international influence and continued impact on culinarians around the world.

This recognition is a meaningful tribute not only to the Academy but also to our Fellows, whose dedication, leadership, and commitment to culinary excellence continue to strengthen our profession across the globe.

These initiatives reflect our enduring commitment to developing future leaders, supporting working professionals, and ensuring that our culinary traditions continue to inspire generations to come.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to Dr. Peggy Chong, HAAC, President of World Top Gourmet; Professor Bill W. Sy, MBA, CEC, AAC, HOF, CCMC; and Chef Dr. Martin Yan, HAAC, HHOF for their support and dedication to promoting the American Culinary Federation and the American Academy of Chefs on the international stage.

It was a privilege to represent our Academy at this distinguished event and to share in the celebration of culinary excellence with colleagues from around the world. This recognition reinforces the importance of international collaboration, professional fellowship, and our collective responsibility to advance the culinary arts.







As Chairman, I remain proud of the work our Academy continues to accomplish and grateful to our Fellows for their ongoing commitment to our mission. Together, we will continue to honor excellence, encourage education, strengthen mentorship, and build opportunities for the next generation of culinarians.

With pride in our profession and appreciation for your continued support,

Joe Aiello

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

2027–2029 AAC Officer Elections

Nominations for the 2027–2029 AAC Officer Elections are now open. The deadline to submit all required paperwork to be considered as a candidate is **December 1, 2026**. Go to Elections for all the information and required forms.

The term of office is a two (2) year term commencing on the Monday following the 2027 ACF National Convention through the close of the 2029 ACF National Convention.

AAC Elections

Save the Date!

2027 American Academy of Chefs Induction Dinner

July 13, 2027 at the Orlando World Center Marriott in Orlando, Florida

The 2027 ACF National Convention taking place July 12-14, at the Orlando World Center Marriott in Orlando, Florida. The 55th Annual AAC Induction Reception and Dinner will be taking place Tuesday evening, July 13, so please mark the date on your calendar if you wish to join us in honoring next year's AAC inductees and award winners. We hope to see you there!











Honoring the Military Veterans in the AAC

The American Academy of Chefs wants to honor both the active duty and military veterans that are part of the Academy. The Lt. General John D. McLaughlin Award is an annual award given out at the AAC Dinner to an AAC member who served, or is currently serving, in the military.

In order to continue selecting chefs deserving of this award each year, we are asking AAC members who have served in the military to notify us of their military service. If you served time in the military, please reach out to Karen Stamper (kstamper@acfchefs.org) at the ACF National Office to update her on your status. This will help us keep track of all the eligible individuals for this award. Thank you for your service!





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

Applications for American Academy of Chefs Induction for 2027 are now available.

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

REQUEST APPLICATION

Tax-Deductible Donations

October 1 - October 30, 2026

Todd D. Felder
Michael Tadlock

DONATE NOW

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!

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.

















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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