

# Jay Rathmann

My name is Jay Rathmann CEC, CCA. I am the owner and Executive Chef of BJ's Nevada Barbecue Company in Sparks, Nevada. Born in Buffalo, New York. I was brought up and lived in the restaurant industry from a very early age. Standing on a milk crate washing dishes on a Friday night after school was my introduction to the restaurant industry. My parents owned a restaurant in Warsaw, New York where it all started for me. After years in New York my family made the pilgrimage to Sparks, Nevada in 1989. Nevada is where I now call home. My parents and I have been running our restaurant for the past 35 years with my wife and sons also being involved in the family business. I feel I have already lived a lifetime doing what I love and still have plenty of years left in me.

I have built my business to the point where I no longer need to be at my restaurant 24/7, so I have made a point to contribute and help where I could with culinary programs, associations and other restaurateurs. My commitment to community service is reflected in my participation in various associations and boards. With a Swiss army knife of knowledge and a blank canvas as a palate, I immersed myself into teaching and helping others. Being President of the American Culinary Federation High Sierra Chefs Association for the past 10 years is my crowning achievement. The Northern Nevada Wine Association is a favorite of mine working with other chefs and distributors to put on exquisite dinners with food and wine pairings. Having the ability to help other businesses and give back to my community is extremely important. The Northern Nevada Public Health Food Protection Hearing and Advisory Board and the Nevada Food Safety Partnership Board allow me to take part in discussions and help make positive changes to regulations that apply to our industry. The Washoe County School District CTE Advisory Technical Skills Board which helps young culinarians and other trades in my area are where I find my passion for education, teaching and collaboration with others. Teaching students from a basic level to mentoring and judging competition culinary teams like ProStart, Skills and FCCLA is rewarding for me. My dedication to mentorship extends beyond my business, as I actively mentor students at the local AACT High School Culinary Program and other local high schools, providing them with the resources necessary to excel in the culinary arts.

I still have a business to run where I am dedicated to cultivating an inclusive and diverse workplace. I prioritize the education of my staff on essential topics such as HACCP, food safety, and personal development. My employees are my second family and when you take care of family, your family will take care of you. Some students from the culinary programs I have worked with now work at my restaurant. The seeds of our labor have created the fruit from which we live on. I work and run my business to make the careers and lives of my employees a better place, if not a home. Always evolving and changing with the times has allowed myself and my restaurant to stay relevant in an ever-changing culinary landscape. Staying relevant, helping others, being the person people can rely on in hard times, doing what's right and learning to live a life that makes you happy is the basis of me being a chef.

Community involvement and fundraising comes easy to me. Helping others in a time of need and contributing to organizations like the Boys and Girls Club and events like Food Truck Fridays encourage others to be a part of something bigger than themselves. For the past 4 years I have helped ACF Chef Chris Nealon in my community prepare and serve a staggering amount of

cioppino to raise money for the Boys and Girls Club. 2024 was a banner year for the event raising over 1.6 million dollars for the club. The High Sierra Chefs Association, with help from AACT culinary students, Truckee Meadows Community College and a lot of food and equipment supplied by BJ's BBQ. Participate in a weekly food truck event in Reno. In the past seven years the event has generated more than \$270,000 for the association that allocates the money to scholarships, equipment, training, travel expenses for culinary competition teams and education most importantly.

Throughout my career, I have been honored with numerous awards and accolades. These include being named ACF HSCA Chef of the Year in 2015 and receiving the ACF Presidential Medallion in 2024. Additionally, I was awarded the Sparks Centennial Sunrise Rotary Humanitarian award in 2020, and I have received multiple Excellence in Food Safety awards from the Northern Nevada Public Health Department. 2023 NACTE Business-Education Partnership Award. I have also been recognized with several Mentor of the Year awards from the Nevada Restaurant Association, in addition to numerous awards from barbecue competitions. I have been honored to receive an award of Congressional Recognition for being a family-owned business.

I place a high value on education, personal growth, professional development, and I strive to instill these values in the students and employees I work with daily. My mission is to help others achieve their fullest potential and to elevate the standards of culinary excellence within our community.