Richard Rosendale, CMC, executive chef at The Greenbrier, White Sulphur Springs, W.Va., understands all about the benefits of being on the team. He was a member of 2004 ACF Culinary Team USA and served as captain of the 2008 team. “It has helped hone my skills at an accelerated rate compared with traditional career paths,” he says. “It forced me to be relentlessly organized as well as think creatively. I think the team is a great option for chefs who want to invest in their skills and eventually see a return on that investment. The return is tenfold if you put in the hard work necessary to be successful with the team.”

And although team members must be prepared to sacrifice, it’s worth it, he says. “It was a lot to ask my family to go through during the years on the team. I could not have done it without them and the brilliant team of chefs around me. You also have to sacrifice your personal time, days off and downtime. It’s hard, but anything worth doing requires this kind of dedication.”

He says he learned important lessons from his team experience. “I learned how to persevere, how to work well with a team, and I also learned discipline. Making a commitment to such a rigorous activity forces one to not procrastinate. You have to train, you have to be ready, because people are depending on you and the world is watching.”

Rosendale has this advice for those who will try out for the 2016 ACF Culinary Team USA in Charlotte, N.C., and Denver this month: “You have to aspire to be great, and then listen to the people around you. The more you know, the more you realize how much more there is to know. You can do yourself a lot of good by asking questions and being open to feedback. This is a process that the team relies on in its evolution, to be open and honest with each other. Be ready to embrace that, and if you do, then you will thrive in your years on the team.”