Mellisa K. Root Named to ACF Culinary National Team USA

St. Augustine, Fla., March 26, 2007—Mellisa K. Root, a pastry chef at Payard Pâtisserie & Bistro at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, has been named to the American Culinary Federation (ACF) Culinary National Team USA, the official representative culinary team for the United States in major national and international culinary competitions.

At an early age, Root would go through her mother’s cookbooks and plan menus. Those feelings of enjoyment led her to become a chef and are the driving force behind her desire to excel in her craft. Throughout her career, Root has earned numerous medals in many national competitions, as well as gold and silver medals at the American Culinary Classic held at the 2007 National Restaurant Association Restaurant, Hotel-Motel Show, the most prestigious international culinary competition in the United States.

Root has continued her career by working alongside and learning from many of the nation's top culinary and pastry-arts experts, including François Payard; Laurent Branlard; Darrin Aoyama, CEPC; Charles Carroll, CEC, AAC; Michael Joy; and Ewald Notter. Formerly, she was the pastry chef at the acclaimed River Oaks Country Club in Houston. Root attended the baking and pastry-arts program at the California Culinary Academy in San Francisco. Root is a member of American Culinary Federation (ACF) National Chapter.

“It is with pleasure that I welcome Mellisa Root as pastry chef for the national team. Mellisa has taken on this task with a full understanding of what is expected and the involvement, as well the commitment needed at this level,” said certified master chef and ACF Culinary National Team USA manager Edward Leonard, CMC, AAC. “She looks at this as a great opportunity and a place to display her passion to help ACF Culinary National Team USA win, as winning is as important to her as it is to us. She already has a deep understanding and sense of responsibility to the team and team’s goals. Her excitement is also a plus.”

ACF Culinary National Team USA is a top contender on the world culinary stage, recently placing fifth overall and winning two gold medals at the EXPOGAST 2006 Culinary World Cup international culinary competition in Luxembourg, November 2006. Additionally, the team took home two gold medals at the Salon Culinaire Mondial in Basel, Switzerland, in 2005, which is held every six years.
The team’s history at IKA is long and distinguished. When Americans began competing as an official team in 1956, they were clearly the underdogs. However, American cookery soon established itself as world-class cuisine. The 1960 team captured the first world championship honor for the United States, and ACF Culinary Team USA repeated the distinction in 1980, 1984 and 1988 by taking the prestigious hot-food competition all three times and establishing a new world record for the most consecutive gold-medal wins. The team’s most recent IKA win came in 2004, when the team took home the gold medal in hot-food cooking, reestablishing ACF Culinary National Team USA as the leader in international cooking.

Members of ACF Culinary National Team USA are: Edward Leonard, certified master chef (CMC), American Academy of Chefs (AAC), ACF Culinary National Team USA manager and executive chef at Westchester Country Club, Rye, N.Y.; Joachim Buchner, CMC, executive chef, Chevy Chase Club, Chevy Chase, Md.; Jamie Keating, certified chef de cuisine (CCC), chef/owner, Gourmet Events and the River Mill Event Center, Columbus, Ga.; Mellisa K. Root, pastry chef, Payard Pâtisserie & Bistro, Las Vegas; Richard Rosendale, certified executive chef (CEC), ACF Culinary Team USA captain and chef/owner, Rosendales, Columbus, Ohio; and Daniel Scannell, CMC, executive chef, Carnegie Abbey Club, Portsmouth, R.I.

Sponsors of ACF Culinary Team USA are Kraft Foodservice, Tyson Food Service, Uncle Ben’s, Unilever, Club Managers Association of America, KitchenAid, Chef Revival, Fortessa, Friedr. Dick, Westchester Country Club, and Blodgett.

The American Culinary Federation, Inc., established in 1929, is the premier professional organization for culinarians in North America. With 20,000 members spanning more than 230 chapters nationwide, ACF is the culinary leader in offering educational resources, training, apprenticeship and accreditation. In addition, ACF operates the most comprehensive certification program for chefs in the United States. ACF is home to ACF Culinary Team USA, the official representative for the United States in major international culinary competitions, and also holds the presidium for the World Association of Chefs Societies, the largest international network of chef associations with more than 8 million members globally. For more information, please visit www.acfchefs.org.

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