



American Culinary Federation Press Release

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Todd Leonard, CEC, Named 2018 U.S.A.'s Chef of the Year™ at the American Culinary Federation National Convention

St. Augustine, Fla., July 30, 2018—The best chef in the nation, according to the American Culinary Federation (ACF), is Todd Leonard, CEC, department chairman at Utah Valley University's Culinary Arts Institute in Orem, Utah. Leonard received the title of 2018 U.S.A.'s Chef of the Year after winning a national competition at **Cook. Craft. Create. ACF National Convention & Show**, held in New Orleans, LA, July 15-19.

The [U.S.A.'s Chef of the Year Award](#) was created in 1963 to acknowledge ACF member Walter Roth, AAC, for his tireless efforts to promote and elevate the culinary profession. The award has grown in prestige and today is the highest honor annually bestowed by the American Culinary Federation. It recognizes an outstanding chef who works and cooks in a full-service dining facility, demonstrates the highest standard of culinary skills, advances the cuisine of America and gives back to the profession through the development of students and apprentices.

Leonard, ACF Western Region Chef of the Year, competed against three other regional finalists for the national award. Chefs, assisted by student apprentices, had one hour to prepare and cook four different plates utilizing a "market basket" of ingredients, including redfish, oysters and pork cheeks, to present to the judges for tasting. A panel of ACF-approved judges evaluated organization, cooking skills, culinary techniques and taste to determine the winner.

"The American Culinary Federation is pleased to recognize Chef Todd Leonard as USA's Chef of the Year for 2018," said ACF National President Stafford T. DeCambra, CEC, CCE, CCA, AAC. "This award acknowledges not only the skill and expertise Chef Leonard showed in the kitchen this year, but also his demonstrated commitment to professionalism and mentorship throughout his career. We congratulate him on a job well done."

Leonard's winning menu included southern braised pork cheek, oyster stew with bronzed red fish and a seafood trio of smoked Creole butter red fish, CT oyster Rockefeller and Cajun redfish mousseline.

Leonard is a member of the ACF Beehive Chefs Chapter Inc. In addition to serving as a culinary educator and mentor for the next generation of chefs at Utah Valley University, he is also a Certified Executive Chef® with the American Culinary Federation. His past experience includes roles at Blue Lemon Restaurants and Thrive Life. Leonard was previously named Western Regional Chef of the Year in 2011 and the Beehive Chapter Chef of the Year in 2006 and 2010, among other accolades.

More than 1,500 chefs, cooks, students and foodservice professionals attended **Cook. Craft. Create. ACF National Convention & Show** at the Hyatt Regency New Orleans. The event offered opportunities for professional development through informative workshops and seminars, cutting-edge demonstrations, a trade show, career fair and national culinary competitions. Keynote speakers included Iron Chef Masaharu Morimoto, culinary entrepreneur John D. Folse and Maneet Chauhan, executive chef/co-owner of Chauhan Ale

& Masala House and judge on Food Network's "Chopped." Visit the [We Are Chefs](#) blog for more information on ACF's 2018 events.

[About the American Culinary Federation](#)

The American Culinary Federation, Inc. (ACF), established in 1929, is the standard of excellence for chefs in North America. With more than 15,500 members spanning more than 170 chapters nationwide, ACF is the leading culinary association offering educational resources, training, apprenticeship and programmatic accreditation. In addition, ACF operates the most comprehensive certification program for chefs in the United States, with the Certified Executive Chef®, Certified Sous Chef®, Certified Executive Pastry Chef® and Certified Culinary Educator® designations accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies. The American Culinary Federation Education Foundation is home to ACF Culinary Team USA, the official representative for the United States in major international culinary competitions, and to Chef & Child, founded in 1989 to promote proper nutrition in children and to combat childhood obesity. For more information, visit www.acfchefs.org. Find ACF on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).

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Photos of the 2018 ACF national award winners are available [here](#) and on the [ACF Flickr page](#). A [short video](#) on the competition is also available for download.