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EMERIL LAGASSE FOUNDATION GRANT EXPANDS ILLINOIS RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION'S EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION'S IMPACT ON CHICAGO'S CULINARY EDUCATION

\$230,000 Grant Supports the Charles and Rochelle Trotter Culinary Endowment, Empowering the Next Generation of Chefs

NEW ORLEANS (February X, 2025) — [Emeril Lagasse Foundation](#) has awarded a \$230,000 grant to the Charles and Rochelle Trotter Culinary Endowment, established within the [Illinois Restaurant Association Education Foundation](#) (IRAEF). This grant underscores the Emeril Lagasse Foundation's mission to create opportunities to inspire, mentor, and enable youth to reach their full potential while supporting culinary, nutrition, and arts education. It also strengthens IRAEF's ability to educate and empower the next generation of culinary professionals in Chicago. Together, these efforts honor the legacy of the late Charles Trotter by expanding access to critical resources and opportunities for aspiring chefs.

The grant stems from a special auction lot featured at Emeril Lagasse Foundation's signature fundraising event, Carnivale du Vin. The lot, donated by Rochelle Trotter in honor of the Charles and Rochelle Trotter Endowment, included a 1900 Château Margaux paired with an exclusive dinner for eight in the wine room of Chef Emeril Lagasse's flagship restaurant, Emeril's New Orleans. "This gift from our generous friend Rochelle is a beautiful tribute to Charlie's vision and a testament to our shared mission of inspiring the next generation," said Chef Emeril Lagasse. "Charlie was a dear friend, and it is truly special to join forces with Rochelle to make a difference in the lives of young aspiring chefs through this endowment."

"The Charles and Rochelle Trotter Culinary Endowment reflects Charles' dedication to fostering excellence and innovation in the culinary arts," said Rochelle Trotter. "This grant ensures that aspiring chefs in Chicago have the mentorship and resources needed to achieve their full potential, continuing the legacy of culinary brilliance Charles so deeply believed in."

Since its creation, the Charles and Rochelle Trotter Culinary Endowment has primarily funded scholarships, helping young chefs across Chicago achieve their dreams. Rochelle Trotter has personally contributed her time, leadership, and nearly \$250,000 to the IRAEF, demonstrating her enduring commitment to education and community impact. "We're incredibly grateful for Rochelle's unwavering commitment to IRAEF and the impactful partnership with the Emeril Lagasse Foundation," said Sam Toia, President & CEO of the Illinois

Restaurant Association. “This endowment exemplifies the power of collaboration to create lasting opportunities for Chicago’s culinary talent.”

Emeril Lagasse Foundation has made significant contributions to the Chicago community, totaling over \$750,000 in grants to Chicago-based organizations. In addition to the IRAEF grant, the Foundation brought its signature program, Emeril’s Culinary Garden & Teaching Kitchen, to Chicago’s Academy for Global Citizenship (AGC) with a \$500,000 grant in 2022. This program blends hands-on culinary and gardening education with traditional academics, empowering students to learn about nutrition, sustainability, and healthy living while cultivating skills that extend far beyond the classroom. In January 2025, the Foundation awarded a \$20,000 grant through the Aaron Sanchez Impact Fund to Pilot Light, supporting culinary education for Latino students at Roosevelt High School, where 75% of students identify as Latino.

“We are deeply committed to making a meaningful difference in the Chicago area through partnerships with institutions such as AGC, IRAEF, and Pilot Light,” said Brian Kish, President of Emeril Lagasse Foundation. “Our goal is to create lasting change in the culinary and educational landscapes through transformative opportunities for young people.”

As Illinois’ premier advocate for hospitality education, the Illinois Restaurant Association Educational Foundation has awarded over \$3.4 million in scholarships, empowering thousands of students through mentorship programs and hands-on training. Thanks to a generous grant from Rochelle Trotter and the Emeril Lagasse Foundation, IRAEF will expand its initiatives, including the ProStart® program—a transformative culinary arts and restaurant management training program now in 52 Illinois high schools. ProStart® equips students with job readiness skills through free camps, competitions, field trips, culinary demonstrations, and classroom training, while also offering hands-on experience in hospitality businesses through job shadow days and job placement opportunities.

Through this collaboration, the Emeril Lagasse Foundation and IRAEF are ensuring that young culinary professionals in Chicago have the tools and resources needed to thrive while honoring Charles Trotter’s enduring legacy of excellence and innovation.

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About Emeril Lagasse Foundation: *Founded in 2002 by Chef Emeril Lagasse and his wife Alden, Emeril Lagasse Foundation is a 501c(3) public charity headquartered in New Orleans. The Foundation’s mission is to create opportunities to inspire, mentor, and enable youth to reach their full potential through culinary, nutrition, and arts education with a focus on life skills development. Since its inception, Emeril Lagasse Foundation has granted more than \$20 million to children’s charities to support culinary, nutrition, and arts programs. The Foundation accomplishes this through three programs. The Community Grants program provides programmatic and capital support to nonprofit organizations across the nation. The signature program, Emeril’s Culinary Garden & Teaching Kitchen, is a national education initiative created to enrich the lives of elementary and middle school children through a fun, fresh perspective on food. The Aarón Sánchez Impact Fund, the newest program, provides culinary arts education and human services programming for Latino youth. To learn more about the foundation and its beneficiaries, visit Emeril.org, or follow on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), or [Instagram](#).*

Charles and Rochelle Trotter Culinary Endowment: In 2016, Mrs. Rochelle Trotter established the “Charles and Rochelle Trotter Culinary Endowment” to continue her late husband’s legacy of providing need-based culinary scholarships to deserving youth. The IRA Educational Foundation was selected as the sole partner for distributing scholarships from this new endowment.

ABOUT THE ILLINOIS RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION: The Illinois Restaurant Association Educational Foundation is a 501 (c)(3) dedicated to building and promoting the health and prosperity of the restaurant industry by investing in youth and workforce. It has awarded more than \$3.4 million in scholarships since its inception. For more information, visit www.illinoisrestaurants.org/IRAEFAboutUs.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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