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NATIONAL CULINARY REVIEW

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Happy New Year!

While many of us are still processing what happened in the last couple years, more of us are ready to move on and move forward. Since becoming ACF president, I know I have moved full steam ahead to start planning for 2022. That includes helping develop the content and structure for the exciting new series of one-day educational summits we plan to roll out, as well as setting dates and details for regional competitions. To learn more about the summits and competition dates, turn to the News Bites section, and to register, visit acfchefs.org.

During my first town hall in November, I shared some highlights from the first meeting of our new board. We discussed new bylaw suggestions, including the proposal to give students a full vote. Also during the meeting, Chef John Schopp, CEC, CEPC, CCA, CCE, AAC, Certification Commission chair, spoke about expanding the certificate program to help you — our members — showcase specialties such as vegan cooking and cooking with cannabis. Of course, a lot of our discussion involved planning for the 2022 ACF National Convention in July in Las Vegas. If you haven't registered yet, I strongly suggest you do so soon in order to take advantage of lower rates! Rates will go up as we get closer to the convention date. I am so excited about one of our keynote speakers, Chef Elizabeth Faulkner, and others who will be announced soon. To watch a recording of the town hall, visit https://bit.ly/3lHM5PL.

This is a special issue of NCR for me and many of our members. The main feature focuses on African American cuisine in honor of Black History Month, but you'll see the diversity of our membership base reflected in other articles throughout the issue, as well. It's my hope that one day, we won't have to designate just one month to Black history — that the contributions people of color have been making in our country and professions will simply be recognized as American history. Until then, we will especially continue to honor this important group of ACF chefs and leaders during the month of February and be mindful and inclusive of the contributions of African Americans and other people of color during the rest of the year.

Over the years, I've veered away from making New Year's resolutions. Instead, I try to set goals for myself. As we enter 2022, I'm making it my goal to stay more connected with friends and family — especially after an isolating and difficult couple of years. How's your work/life balance going? Prayerfully, this new year brings us all hope for better days. Keep those wellness checks going for your colleagues, friends, family and yourself. You can stay connected with your fellow members through our many channels — be it visiting our Facebook, Twitter, TikTok and Instagram pages; reading about each other in NCR; staying up to date with our biweekly e-newsletter, The Culinary Insider; listening in or attending chapter meetings, calls and events; or simply picking up the phone to talk to an old friend, and by all means, reaching out to new ones, too!

Cheers to a happy and healthy new year!

Kimberly Brock Brown, CEPC, CCA, AAC
National President, American Culinary Federation

Contact me at **chefkbb@acfchefs.org** or follow me on Instagram **@chefkimberlybrockbrown** and facebook **@chefkimberlyepicurean**

¡Feliz Año Nuevo!

Si bien muchos de nosotros todavía estamos procesando lo que sucedió en los últimos dos años, somos aún más los que estamos listos para seguir adelante y mirar hacia el futuro. Desde que me convertí en presidenta de ACF, sé que he avanzado a toda máquina para comenzar a hacer planes para 2022. Eso incluye colaborar con el desarrollo del contenido y la estructura de la nueva y emocionante serie de cumbres educativas de un día de duración que planeamos implementar, así como también establecer fechas y detalles para las competencias regionales. Para conocer más información sobre las cumbres y las fechas de las competencias, diríjanse a la sección News Bites, y para registrarse, ingresen en acfchefs.org.

Durante mi primera asamblea en noviembre, compartí algunos aspectos destacados de la primera reunión de nuestra nueva junta. Hablamos sobre nuevas sugerencias para los estatutos, incluida la propuesta de darles a los estudiantes un voto completo. Asimismo, durante la reunión, el chef John Schopp, CEC, CEPC, CCA, CCE, AAC, presidente de la Comisión de Certificación, habló sobre la expansión del programa de certificación para ayudarlos a ustedes, nuestros miembros, a exhibir especialidades como la cocina vegana y la cocina con cannabis. Por supuesto, gran parte de nuestro debate tuvo que ver con la planificación de la Convención Nacional ACF 2022 en julio en Las Vegas. Si aún no se han registrado, les sugiero que lo hagan pronto para aprovechar las tarifas más bajas. Las tarifas aumentarán a medida que nos acerquemos a la fecha de la convención. Estoy muy excitada por uno de nuestros oradores principales, la chef Elizabeth Faulkner, y por otros que se anunciarán pronto. Para ver una grabación de la asamblea, ingresen en https://bit.ly/3lHM5PL.

Esta edición de NCR es especial para mí y para muchos de nuestros miembros. El artículo principal se centra en la cocina afroamericana en honor al Mes de la Historia Afroamericana, pero también verán la diversidad de nuestros miembros reflejada en otros artículos a lo largo de la edición. Tengo la esperanza de que, algún día, no tengamos que designar solo un mes para la historia afroamericana, y que las contribuciones de las personas de color en nuestro país y nuestras profesiones sean reconocidas simplemente como historia estadounidense. Hasta entonces, seguiremos honrando especialmente a este importante grupo de chefs y líderes de la ACF durante el mes de febrero y seremos conscientes e incluyentes de las contribuciones de los Afroamericanos y de otra gente de color en lo que queda del año.

A lo largo de los años, me he alejado de los propósitos de Año Nuevo. En cambio, trato de establecer metas para mi vida. A medida que se acerca el 2022, mi objetivo es mantenerme más conectada con mis amigos y familiares, especialmente después de un par de años aislados y difíciles. Todos ustedes pueden mantenerse en contacto con sus compañeros a través de nuestros diversos canales, ya sea en nuestras páginas de Facebook, Twitter, TikTok e Instagram; leyendo sobre los demás en NCR; manteniéndose al día con nuestro boletín electrónico quincenal, The Culinary Insider; escuchando o asistiendo a reuniones, llamadas y eventos de la delegación; o simplemente levantando el teléfono para hablar con un viejo amigo¡y también alcanzado a los nuevos!"

¡Brindo por un feliz y saludable año nuevo!

Kimberly Brock Brown, CEPC, CCA, AAC
Presidente Nacional, American Culinary Federation

What's Cooking on WeAreChefs.com

Visit **WeAreChefs.com**, the official content hub for the American Culinary Federation, for online exclusives, including interviews, articles on industry trends, recipes and more.

What's Hot, What's Not

The National Restaurant Association released its annual What's Hot Culinary Forecast, which surveyed more than 350 ACF members in October 2021. Nearly 100 food items and culinary concepts were rated for the report, which offers a detailed look at the topics, trends and products expected to drive restaurant menus in the coming year. Sustainable concepts and ingredients, refined menus and better-for-you foods will reign in the new year, according to the report.

More 2022 Trends

Andrew Freeman & Co. (AF&Co), a hospitality consultancy, also released its annual trends report. Highlights for 2022 include laksa, the signature Singapore dish named the "hottest dish of the year," along with the rise in popularity of Caribbean, Filipino and other global cuisines.

James Beard Foundation's Report

Experts behind the "State of the Industry Report" released by the James Beard Foundation in December called for a complete reshaping of the hospitality industry, with more attention paid to taking care of restaurant workers, not just patrons.

ACF ChefsForum Webinar Series

The ACF ChefsForum Webinar Series has been a smashing success, with high attendance each session. Webinars have covered advanced chocolate-making, working with laminated doughs, trends in healthcare foodservice and more — with additional sessions planned for the coming months. Missed a webinar? All recorded sessions are available online.

Ingredient of the Month

Each month, we highlight a different ingredient in the ACF's Online Learning Center. Visit the center at acfchefs.org/IOTM to complete a quiz and earn one hour of continuing education credit toward ACF certification and recertification.

THE CULINARY INSIDER

The Culinary Insider, the ACF's bi-weekly newsletter, offers timely information about events, certification, member discounts, the newest blog posts, competitions, contests and much more. Sign up at **acfchefs.org/tci**.

Follow the ACF on your favorite social media platforms:

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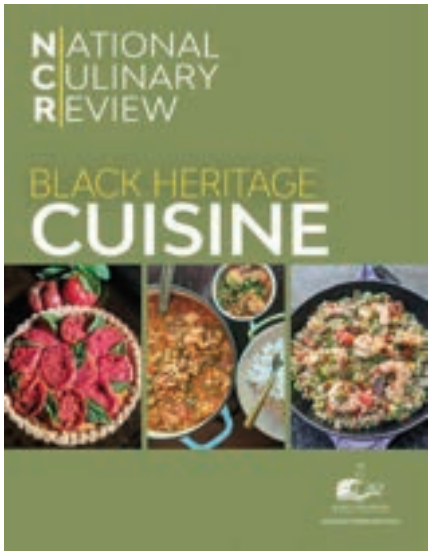
Twitter question of the month:

What is one of your New Year's goals for 2022?
Tweet us your answer using the hashtag **#ACFasks** and we'll retweet our favorites.



ACF's Online Learning Center

Check out ACF's Online Learning Center. There you'll find NCR quizzes, videos of educational sessions from ACF events, practice exams for certification and more. Visit **learn.acfchefs.org** to get started.

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NEWS BITES

2022 One-Day Summits

ACF has developed a new series of one-day educational summits to deliver a higher level of in-person educational programming. Six summit events will be offered this year, each held from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (with the potential for a welcome reception the night prior) in cities throughout the country. Each summit consists of five presentations or demonstrations by top industry chefs; attendance is limited to 150 attendees. The first summit, to be held March 10 at the Rosen School in Orlando, Florida, will cover advanced culinary techniques (specifics to be determined). Other planned summits include:

- Advanced Pastry: May 14, Dallas College, Dallas
- Advanced Culinary Medicine and Healthcare: August 13, University of Montana, Missoula, Montana

There will also be summits covering Advanced Culinary Cannabis, Advanced Culinary Education and Advanced Plant-Forward Cooking at locations and on dates to be determined. In addition to the in-person events, a series of Culinary Leadership Bootcamp summits will be held virtually every Monday in April. More details will be communicated as they develop, or visit acfchefs.org/events.

The 2024 ACF Culinary Team USA Gears Up

Back row from left: Chefs Steve Jilleba, CMC, CCE, CCA, Logan M. Christensen, CEC, Dan Holtgrave, CEC, Timothy D. Recher, CEC, AAC, Kevin Storm, CEC, CCA, AAC, Susan Notter, CEPC;
Front row from left: Chefs Randy Torres, CEC, AAC, Ted Polfelt, CEC, CCA, AAC, James K. Storm, Troman Avenido Felizmenio, Thomas J. Macrina, CEC, CCA, AAC, Chairman of ACFEF

ACF Culinary Team USA held its first two practices late last year, with more planned for the coming months in preparation for the Villeroy & Boch Culinary World Cup in Luxembourg this year and the 2024 IKA Culinary Olympics in Stuttgart, Germany. The first practice was held at Oregon Coast Culinary Institute in Coos Bay, Oregon, where the team's assistant team manager, **Chef Randy Torres, CEC, AAC,** serves as executive director. Another practice was held at Brightwater: A Center for the Study of Food, an academic department at NorthWest Arkansas Community College in Bentonville, Arkansas.

Chef Kevin Storm, CEC, CCA, AAC, team manager, says the locations for the practices are thoughtfully selected from a pool of applicants (including culinary schools) and must meet certain requirements, like having ample kitchen space and being able to offer students for assistance. At each of the initial practices, Chef Storm says, the team is mainly focused on R&D and refining menu development, but there is also attention placed on education for both the team members and culinary students. "We get a lot accomplished at the practices, and there is a lot of interaction with the students," he says. At the last practice, **Chef John Coletta, CEC, AAC**, demonstrated rice recipes from his

new book, while Chef Storm ran a seminar on halibut and **Chef Susan Notter, CEPC,** Team USA's pastry coach, did one on chocolate. In addition, **Chef Steve Jilleba, CMC, CCE, CCA,** spoke about the Certified Master Chef exam.

"We try to give back to the schools with learning opportunities; they pay big dividends for us, so it's a win-win for both," Chef Storm says. "It also helps us grow our outreach for ACF membership and is helpful for future team recruitment."

At press time, details were being worked out for additional practices scheduled this year throughout the country. To read more about the team and how practice sites are chosen, visit **WeAreChefs.com**.

Register TODAY for the 2022 ACF National Convention in Las Vegas!

Don't miss this year's event, held July 25-28, at Caesars Forum, with the board of governors meeting scheduled for Sunday, July 24 and the AAC fellows meeting and dinner slated for Tuesday, July 26. Be part of the largest annual gathering of chefs, students and foodservice professionals in the U.S. An array of seminars, cooking demonstrations, networking and social functions await you at the American Culinary Federation's national convention. Reconnect with fellow chefs, listen to more than 20 world-class presenters, watch demos, demos and more demos and sample products from more than 100 exhibitors displaying the latest and greatest in food, drink and equipment. We can't wait to see you! Register sooner for reduced rates. Prices for both all-access to the convention with plus meals or just for the education only will continue to go up closer to the convention in July. Register at **acfchefs.org/ACF/Events**.

Regional Competition Dates Announced

The locations and dates for regional competitions have been announced. The first one of the year will be Western Region, Feb. 4–5 at the Culinary Arts Institute at Utah Valley University in Orem, Utah. Visit **acfchefs.org/awards** for the full list.

Salut

ACF Chicago Chefs and the Chicago Culinary Museum hosted a dinner in December to celebrate four legendary women in the hospitality industry as they were inducted into the museum's Chefs Hall of Fame. Honored were: **Chef of the Year Sarah Grueneberg**, owner and executive chef of Monteverde Restaurant; **Pastry Chef of the Year Meg Galus**, partner and executive pastry chef of Cocoa + Co.; **Mary Kay Bonoma**, executive vice president of the Illinois Restaurant Association; and **Chef Ina Pinkney**, the former owner of the acclaimed Ina's breakfast and brunch restaurant, a book author, a TV host and a longtime member of the prestigious Les Dames d'Escoffier society for women in foodservice. The women were honored for having shaped Chicago's revered culinary scene.

Left to right: Chef Sarah Grueneberg, Ina Pinckney, Pastry Chef Meg Galus and Mary Kay Bonoma

Chef Jason Ziobrowski, CEC, president of ACF Chefs of Charlotte, was invited to emcee the Forever Oceans Kahala Klash, held in November at the Culinary Institute of America. The competition pits eight student finalists from the CIA against one another in a cook-off to earn scholarships. The panel of celebrity judges **included Chefs Andrew Zimmern, Rick Moonen, Nick DiGiovanni** and **Mark William Allison**.

TRAINING 101

Operators are teaching skills in-house to both attract new staff and fast-track training // By Amanda Baltazar

Burger Boss, a five-unit fast-casual chain headquartered in Corona, California, is bringing high school students on board with two goals: finding new employees and giving young teens new skills.

It's not news to anyone that the restaurant industry is suffering from a labor shortage right now. In addition, several culinary schools have closed, leaving operators without trained staff.

However, some restaurateurs are taking on the training themselves.

Burger Boss started doing that this year by contacting schools that run regional occupational programs. Teachers connect students with the restaurants, and the school provides workers' compensation insurance to protect the kids.

The students, who are mostly sophomores and juniors, work at their local Burger Boss for short shifts, usually 4 p.m. to 7 p.m., in which the new hires are trained in everything from cooking to prepping, food safety and orders coming in. "It gives them a great opportunity to learn in a real-life scenario," says **Odeh Farha**, Burger Boss director of operations.

The training is a six-month program, and students usually work in the stores twice a week, with two students assigned per restaurant. "If all goes well, we can present these students with actual positions in our stores at the end of it," Farha says.

Burger Boss managers meet with teachers weekly so that they can focus with the students on areas of improvement. "They're not just getting trained by us," Farha explains, "but they're getting feedback and can focus on those areas in the classroom to develop their skills."

DESIGNED FOR STUDENTS

Last July, Groundwork Kitchen opened in Baltimore with the goal of being both a restaurant and a culinary arts training program.

The location operates classes for up to 20 students, who attend a 12-week program free of charge. The students spend about two-thirds of their time actively

Left: Bird's eye view of Groundwork Kitchen; Right: Groundwork Kitchen program director Ellen Levy.

training in the operating restaurant and a third of their time learning culinary skills in a classroom setting. New students will be welcomed every 13 weeks.

"We're really excited to give students a career in hospitality," Executive **Chef Kimberly Triplett** says.

Not only is the program free, but students receive a $100 stipend weekly. To qualify, students must fall below the median income for Baltimore. There were more than 90 applicants for the first 12-week program. Groundwork's program director, **Ellen Levy**, says, "We evaluate applications based on how our training aligns with someone's career goals and how interested they are in the specific training we offer."

The facility teaches both front-of-house and back-of-house skills since many students aren't yet sure which path they want to follow. They learn skills ranging from safe food handling to cooking and customer service.

Groundwork Kitchen's program includes four components: culinary skills training; life skills training (including job readiness and job searching); hands-on experience; and individualized case management support and coaching. Support continues for six months after graduation, and upon graduation, all students earn ServSafe certifications.

"Everyone is exploring everything," Levy says regarding the various jobs in culinary. "We want to expose them to everything: working for restaurants, caterers, grocers and so on."

BRAND NEW WORKERS

Titan Hospitality Group in Crofton, Maryland, has tripled its training time for new hires since many of them are now coming

to the three-restaurant group with no prior experience in the hospitality industry.

"It's a unique time," says **James J. King**, founder and CEO.

Traditionally, King hires staffers with experience and spends five to seven days training them, but he's extended that time to two to three weeks to provide much more extensive training.

While the upside to this program is that King gets more employees who stay longer, the downside (at least for now) is that it requires significant financial and time commitment. Plus, not everyone makes it through the training to become a full-time employee, and established employees are putting in extra hours to train new hires. "It's pulling a lot of our management and resources out of operations, which we desperately need, and we're directing them into training classes, so it's got a double impact," King explains.

Titan Hospitality Group founder and CEO James J. King

Since new hires are so inexperienced, "we're having to go back to the basics — how to carry a tray, how to use a POS, how to do credit card transactions," King says. "We're even having to teach small things such as restaurant lingo."

About half of the training is done in bulk, so new hires for each of the three concepts go through orientation together in a classroom setting. The other half of the time is spent in the individual restaurants, working one-on-one with experienced back- or front-of-house employees.

Even when employees are out on the floor in the front of the house, King says, they have to start slowly. Instead of beginning new servers with a section, they get one table and build up from there.

Having said that, he also doesn't train people on the floor on slow days. "The more they see, the more they'll learn, so they'll get a lot more out of it on Fridays than on Mondays."

King pays employees during their training period. Their hourly wage is $15, which drops once they become servers since they start making tips. The rate stays the same for hourly workers or increases for back-of-house workers.

King says there's been another upside to the more intensive training: He's learned how to train better. He has employees try all the food and learn about its provenance. They can then share their opinions. New hires also participate in wine tastings "so they become a lot more hands-on with the product," he says.

"That's been the biggest difference — we've gone away from paper and presentation and slides, and we've let them eat, drink, taste and smell."

Amanda Baltazar is a Pacific Northwest-based writer who covers food, beverages, restaurants and chefs.

ACF's Training Programs

The ACF offers various programs for foodservice and culinary industry employers and educators to train, certify and continue to educate their employees or students. Take a look:

ACF Online Learning Center

ACF's Online Learning Center (OLC) offers additional opportunities to enhance your skills, advance your career and maintain your ACF certification and includes:

- Video demonstrations by celebrity chefs on culinary techniques
- Panel discussions with industry experts on culinary trends
- Knowledge-based courses, such as nutrition, safety and sanitation and supervisory management
- Practice written exams to help you prepare for the ACF certification written exam
- Specialized certificates to validate your knowledge in areas such as culinary essentials and culinary cannabis

With the OLC, you can easily document your achievements for your employer with all completed courses in one place and certificates that can be printed at any time. For ACF members, the continuing education hours are automatically uploaded to your profile, meaning you don't need to keep track of your documents when it's time to recertify. Learn more at **acfchefs.org/OLC/**.

ACFEF Apprenticeships

The ACFEF apprenticeship program is a proven training program that provides chefs, trainers and instructors with a list of industry relevant knowledge and skills competencies across all kitchen stations. Apprentices have access to an online portal to track skills and reinforce knowledge through easy-to-understand text and images. The apprenticeship portal can be used as part of an ACFEF apprenticeship program or as an independent training tool for culinary programs.

Benefits of implementing our training programs:

- Train staff to industry standards using a reputable program
- Increase staff retention as apprentices become committed employees
- Improve safety, productivity and profitability
- Develop a staff skilled in all kitchen stations to help fill gaps
- Expand recruitment opportunities by being listed on the ACF website as an ACFEF-recognized apprenticeship program

Upon successful completion of the program, apprentices are eligible to earn ACF certification. Learn about the different program levels at **acfchefs.org/apprenticeship**.

ACF METRO MOBILE CHEFS AND COOKS ASSOCIATION

// By Amelia Levin

The ACF Metro Mobile Chefs and Cooks Association was founded in 1986 by **Chef Levi Ezell**, with support from the late **Chef Herman Packer** and **Chef Henry Douglas, CEC, AAC**, both culinary arts instructors at Bishop State Community College. Today, **Chef Samuel Spencer**, a Bishop State graduate himself and protégé of the aforementioned chefs, carries on the chapter's legacy as president since 2017.

Currently, the chapter has 42 members, 28 of whom are students, many at Bishop State.

"I work closely with the students when it comes to ACF certification and job training," says Chef Spencer, who is the foodservice director for the nonprofit Guided Discoveries, which runs summer camps. "Over the years, the membership has grown, but at one point, the chapter started to fizzle out. We were able to bring it back in the last couple of years, and the students played a major role in helping get the chapter back up and running. From the beginning until now, we [as a chapter] have always been focused on education and giving back and networking."

Upon graduating from the ACFEF-accredited Bishop State, students earn their Certified Culinarian certification "and they also get the gift of industry experience and knowledge working with other professionals and educators in our chapter," Chef Spencer says. "The students in our chapter really hold on to their membership because they clearly see the benefit of networking and being around other chefs who can help them grow and mentor them to get to the next level." Most recently, a Bishop State graduate earned a full scholarship to the Culinary Institute of America. Others have gone on to work at preeminent local restaurants and major foodservice operators like Aramark. "We also have several alumni and past students working at the college."

Left to right: Bishop State alumni and ACF Chefs Samuel Spencer, Andrew Bedwell, Ryan Rogers and Lawrence Goldsmith.

Members of the Mobile chapter are regular volunteers in their community. Many volunteer at least once or twice a month at local food banks, chiefly Feeding the Gulf Coast. During the height of the pandemic, chapter members boxed and handed out hundreds of meals

Clockwise from the top: ACF Metro Mobile Chefs and Cooks Association President Samuel Spencer (far left) and other members of the Bishop State Community College Advisory Committee; A variety of pastries prepared by students from the Advanced Baking Class at Bishop State Community College; Chef Spencer.

at the University of South Alabama's stadium for those in need.

Chapter members and volunteers also regularly work with Mobile County Public Schools to host career fairs and educational seminars for high school students, as well as introduce healthy foods to elementary and middle school students through the ACFEF Chef & Child Initiative. Nine of the 11 high schools in the area offer culinary arts classes through Bishop State. In those classes, Chef Spencer says, students gain hospitality management, college readiness and soft skills. For National Nutrition Month and ACF's Childhood Nutrition Day in October, chapter members conducted demos with the theme of "fruit from around the world." The chapter also worked with Feeding the Gulf Coast to help with a fundraiser event that brought local restaurants and chefs together to cook dinner for 500 guests. The organization's 22nd annual Chef's Challenge is slated for April and most certainly will feature many ACF Metro Mobile chapter members.

Chef Spencer, who was born and raised in Mobile, has also directly benefited from his ACF membership and participation in the Metro Mobile chapter. He was 19 and already had five years of industry experience — having worked at Kentucky Fried Chicken and then at Springhill Medical Center in Mobile — when he was first introduced to the ACF, along with Bishop State.

"My sous chef at the time was a graduate of Bishop State, where I decided to go to culinary school and met Herman Pecker and Henry Douglas," says Chef Spencer, who graduated first in his class in 2012 and went on to serve as executive chef at The Admiral, a Wyndham Hotel in Mobile, in 2014. "It was about a six-month to a year transition from meeting them and entering the program. Working around other ACF chefs and past graduates gave me that push to go to college and learn the professional terminology. The best decision I made was to take the time to go to culinary school, even if I had been cooking for years. From there it's been all uphill, and being involved with ACF and the chapter has had a tremendous impact on my career. Having been groomed by my mentors, my goal is to keep everyone afloat and the chapter together and continuing to grow stronger."

Janiqua Hunter, a culinary student at Bishop State and an ACF Metro Mobile chapter member, points to the networking and mentorship as two main reasons why she remains so involved in the organization. "I decided to join the ACF because I was inspired by the professionalism, knowledge and success of the professionals in my chapter," she says. "The ACF has afforded me the opportunity to further expand my knowledge in the culinary industry, travel to different locations to connect with several culinary professionals and increase my culinary skills to further advance my career. I am honored to be a part of an organization with professional chefs that love their profession and contribute to the success of upcoming chefs."

Top: ACF Student Chef Janiqua Hunter, Bishop State Community College; Bottom (left to right): ACF Student Chefs Traquan Fountain, Courtney Davis and Ladeja Williams, also from Bishop State.

Turn to p. 24 for recipes submitted by Hunter in our Classical vs. Modern feature.

Amelia Levin is the editor-in-chief of National Culinary Review.

LONGING FOR LAMB

Chefs are using the protein to experiment with global flavors // By Lauren Kramer

Lamb scottadita with walnut achovy salsa and broccolini from Cafe Juanita in Kirkland, Washington (photo courtesy of the American Lamb Board).

Menued all over the world in different formats, lamb is universally popular. In the wake of the global pandemic, as diners return to restaurants with an appetite for experience, adventure and satisfaction, lamb offers a platform for more exploration with new dishes and global flavors.

"People adore lamb, and when you're a fan, you look for it and order it wherever it's available," says **Chef Daniel Asher**, executive chef and partner at Ash'Kara, a restaurant with locations in Boulder and Denver. "Because lamb comes with a high-value perception, guests know they'll pay more for it but that it will be worth it because eating lamb is more of an experience."

At Ash'Kara, Chef Asher menus a grilled lamb kofta as a $19 entrée that features two three-ounce koftas served with a house-made labneh infused with saffron, alongside spiced rice and pomegranate molasses. The kofta (also kofte) is a Middle Eastern-inspired skewered patty made from freshly ground lamb shoulder. Ash'Kara sources lamb shoulder from the Buckner Family Ranch in Boulder County, Colorado, and grinds it with a mixture of herbs and spices. "The flavor infusion is much better than buying finished ground lamb, and when you grind the fat in with the spices, you get a great finished

Ouzi, or braised lamb with rice from Ash'Kara in Denver (photo courtesy of the American Lamb Board).

product with excellent aromatics and wonderful notes of char and caramelization on the outside as the kofta grills," Chef Asher says.

The kofta mixture improves in flavor as it marinates with the spice mix, and Chef Asher makes large batches ahead of time, forming them into the elongated patties and stacking them in layers of parchment paper. Koftas are grilled as the orders come in, though the patties can also be par-cooked under moist heat and then finished on the grill, reducing cooking time from 10 minutes to just two, if necessary.

Ash'Kara is on the verge of launching a lunch menu, and Chef Asher plans to feature a lamb shawarma wrap and bowl on that menu. "Lamb also becomes a phenomenal breakfast sausage to have as a brunch application," he says. "You can use the lamb kofta mix with maple syrup, sage and fennel, using casings to make your sausage links in-house."

At Baba, a restaurant in Spokane, Washington, **Chef-Owner Adam Hegsted** was recently in the midst of designing a new menu featuring Mediterranean-influenced comfort food. After some research, he developed two dishes using lamb: lamb shank tagine and shakshuka with lamb merguez sausage. Both dishes have quickly become popular staples.

"We make our own lamb sausage for the shakshuka, grilling them and adding them to the dish with chermoula sauce," Chef Hegsted says. The sausages can be made well ahead of time and be frozen or refrigerated.

The menu also features a lamb shank tagine that's slow-braised for up to six hours

"PEOPLE ADORE LAMB, AND WHEN YOU'RE A FAN, YOU LOOK FOR IT AND ORDER IT WHEREVER IT'S AVAILABLE."
–CHEF DANIEL ASHER


Left: Lamb shank tagine by Chef Adam Hegsted, owner of Baba in Spokane, Washington; Right: Shakshuka with lamb merguez sausage from Ash'Kara in Denver (both photos couresty of the American Lamb Board).

with preserved lemons, spices, olives and barberries and and served with couscous. "Not everyone knows what a tagine is, but we build trust with our diners, so when they come in, they know our food will make them feel good, so they're more willing to try something new."

Chef Hegsted favors domestic lamb for a few reasons. "The eye is a lot bigger, there's a little more meat, and the intermuscular flavor fat makes it more flavorful and tender," he says. "Some people think lamb can be too gamey, or they've tried an imported product that's tougher. So finding the right product first is the place to start. Then, treat it right. For lamb shank or shoulder, cook it a little slower. For rack of lamb or another more tender cut, grill it. Leg of lamb is easy to cook, can be roasted or made into kebabs, and ground lamb is easy to use for burgers, meatballs."

At Cafe Juanita in Kirkland, Washington, **Chef-Owner Holly Smith** celebrates the cuisine of northern Italy and loves featuring lamb on her menu, often as a scottadita with walnut anchovy salsa and broccolini. "The word scottadita means 'burn your fingers,' as in, this dish is so delicious that you can't help but pick up the bone, that it will burn your fingers but it will be worth it," she says. "By noting that on the menu, we're telling our diners that there's nothing impolite about

"WHEN IT COMES TO RACK OF LAMB, THE PERCEIVED VALUE IS QUITE HIGH, AND YOU HAVE A GREAT DEAL OF CONTROL OVER PORTIONING SO YOU CAN GET A GOOD YIELD."
-CHEF HOLLY SMITH, CHEF-OWNER AT CAFE JUANITA

New in Deli: Lamb Charcuterie

Adding to the diverse selection of pork-based charcuterie on the market is a new line of lamb charcuterie now available through Aussie Select, produced by World Select Cuts. "We import pasture-raised lamb from Australia and handcraft it in a time-honored manner in Texas," says **Jaclyn Glatzer**, president and chief operating officer at World Select Cuts. "Our team brings together experts in butchery, menu innovation and culinary development intending to do for lamb what the deli did for turkey."

Compared to other proteins, lamb is used and consumed far less by both chefs and consumers. But among other benefits, the meat is lean and demands less of a carbon footprint for its production. Aussie Select set a goal of reaching carbon-neutral status by 2030. According to initial sales data, both the lamb pastrami and lamb ham sold out within 10 days at Pelican Brewing Company in Pacific City, Oregon, and were also popular at Village Green Restaurant in Ridgewood, New Jersey.

The charcuterie is also menued at Orlando World Center Marriott in Orlando, Florida, as a Reuben flatbread and a lamb ham and feta wrap. Brunch diners at the Ritz-Carlton in Denver can order a Reuben sandwich or a lamb ham and eggs Benedict. Lamb ham is served on a baguette at the Hilton Chicago O'Hare Airport and on a potato roll with melted swiss cheese and peppers at the Westin Seattle. "Some chefs are chopping up the lamb pastrami and ham and mixing it into mac 'n cheese or serving it in breakfast burritos," Glatzer says. "We're seeing more independent restaurant, hotel and country club chefs using the product because they appeal to Halal and Jewish consumers , as well." Aussie Select products are available through major U.S. distributors.
- Amelia Levin

picking up that bone." The dish offers more than just taste — it's giving diners that experience they crave.

The $45-$50 dish is a serving of three lamb chops. "After we butcher the racks, we add lemon peel, rosemary, thyme, chili and extra virgin olive oil," Chef Smith says. "We'll render the fat cap after seasoning and take the rack to just below rare before service, bringing it back up on our grill or on a flat top."

Walnut anchovy is one of Chef Smith's favorite condiments, and the walnut anchovy salsa, served with bitter greens like charred radicchio, adds a tasty flourish to the dish. "When it comes to rack of lamb, the perceived value is quite high, and you have a great deal of control over portioning so you can get a good yield," she says. "Moreover, we save all our scraps,

Braised curried American lamb shank (credit: American Lamb Board).

Grilled lamb kofta with saffron spiced yogurt (credit: American Lamb Board).

and leftovers become ravioli, so there are ways to control costs. Lamb is so versatile; it lends itself easily to many applications."

When working with any protein, Chef Asher says the goal is always to layer flavor and develop a craveable experience, and nothing's different when working with lamb. "You want guests taking a couple of bites and thinking, 'When can I get this again?'" he says. "If you're sitting in a beautiful place, being well taken care of and eating something delicious, you naturally want to repeat that experience and tell your friends and family about it. Lamb brings that elevated expression, and much like duck or dry-aged rib-eye, guests know they'll pay a bit more for it — but that it will be worth it."

Lauren Kramer is an award-winning writer based in the Pacific Northwest. She has been a regular contributor to the National Culinary Review for the past 16 years.

Lamb Kofta Sliders

By Chef Rajeev Patgaonkar, CEC, AAC

Makes 10 to 12 sliders

Kofta is a family of meatball dishes found in the Indian subcontinent and in Middle Eastern and Central Asian cuisines. In the simplest form, koftas consist of balls of minced or ground meat — usually lamb, mutton, chicken or beef — mixed with spices and/or onions. Koftas in India are usually served cooked in a spicy curry and are eaten with rice or flatbread such as naan or roti. Koftas are also sometimes sprinkled with chaat masala and coriander leaves and served as an appetizer with sliced onions and lime wedges. I like to build my lamb kofta sliders with a tamarind date chutney.

- 2 pounds ground lamb
- 1/2 pound finely minced yellow or red onions
- 2 ounces finely minced jalapenos
- 1 ounce finely minced fresh garlic
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin
- 1 tablespoon ground coriander
- Salt, to taste
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 tablespoon turmeric powder
- 1/2 bunch cilantro, roughly chopped
- 1 teaspoon garam masala
- 2 whole eggs (optional)
- 2 tablespoons oil, plus more as needed
- Chopped cilantro and sliced red onion (for garnish)

1. Mix all of the ingredients except for the oil until well combined. Allow the mixture to rest for at least 2 hours or overnight to allow flavors to develop.
2. Scoop the mixture into small balls, roughly 2 to 3 ounces each, using a #20 or #24 ice cream scoop and place the balls on a plate or tray.
3. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Working in batches, add a few balls at a time, flattening them to create sliders. Cook until browned on both sides, about 4 minutes, flipping halfway (sliders can also be cooked on a grill or charbroiler).
4. Arrange seared sliders on a sheet pan lined with parchment paper. Finish cooking to temperature in a 350°F oven for about 6 to 8 minutes. Serve garnished with chopped cilantro and sliced red onion on a slider bun with other desired condiments.

HOW THEY'RE GROWN: POTATOES

Two Idaho farmers talk about the labor-intensive and complex process behind growing, harvesting and processing russets **// by Amelia Levin**

Planting

Idaho's climate of warm days and cool nights, combined with mineral-rich volcanic soil, make perfect growing conditions for the hearty potato crop.

"There are literally lava beds around us because we have a number of extinct volcanoes west of Idaho Falls and Blackfoot," says **Stephanie Bench**, sales representative at Wada Farms, a large producer of Idaho potatoes.

First planting usually occurs at the end of April after the snow thaws in the more southern portions of Magic Valley, a region in south-central Idaho, and a week or so later in southeastern Idaho. It's then that potato farmers "have to deal with everything Mother Nature throws at us," says Bench, who grew up on a potato farm in Idaho. "There are so many variables; you don't want to put the tuber in the ground too early because if it's too cold, it won't grow." This past growing season, however, saw some of the highest temperatures on the record in the state, causing stress on the plant, which can potentially lead to lower yields and sizes.

To plant the crop, a potato planter uses knives to cut into the soil every few inches while dropping seed potatoes in the holes. Seed potatoes are essentially small potatoes that a planter cuts up before dropping them into the holes. From there, "it's all about watering all summer long to make sure they don't get too dry or too wet," says **Jill Crapo Cox**, a fourth-generation farmer and vice president of sales for her great-grandfather's farm, Sun-Glo of Idaho, which now

Left: Equipment used to harvest potatoes; Right: Morning sunrise at a potato farm in Idaho Falls, Idaho (credit: Idaho Potato Commission).

spans 43,000 acres and produces about 55,000 pounds of potatoes annually. Sun-Glo also manages its own certified seed farm and produces seed potatoes for other farmers across the U.S.

There are two main types of russet potatoes grown in Idaho: Burbank, being the most prominent and oldest breed, and the Norkotah, which was introduced in the 80s and has a larger profile with higher yields. Many Idaho farms now also grow red and gold potatoes, as well as other russet varieties.

Harvest

The majority of the harvest takes place sometime between mid-September and mid-October and lasts three to four weeks. "Some schools in the southeast Idaho area will shut down for two weeks so everyone can help with the harvest," says Bench, who notes that in addition to families and kids, even teachers will chip in to help. It's even a rite of passage for young teenagers to drive the short bed trucks from the potato fields to the cellars and back again.

"I started driving a truck when I was in the third grade," Cox says. Now that the trucks are much larger, the driving crew consists mostly of teenagers and adults.

During harvest, two trucks drive side by side, with one digging out the potatoes and dumping them into the back of the second truck. When that truck is fully loaded, it's driven to a cellar, where the truck backs up to unload the loot. "And then, it's back to the field to repeat this process all day and all night," Cox says.

Top: Idaho is mostly known for its russet potatoes, but farmers there also grow red, gold and fingerling potatoes; Bottom: Two trucks drive side-by-side during potato harvest season in the fall (credit: Idaho Potato Commission).

Storing

Once harvested, potatoes are immediately stored in a large dome-shaped temperature-controlled cellar, where they will sit dormant — dirt still on them and all — for 30 days to "go through the sweat," Bench says. Potatoes have a lot of natural moisture, so this is the process in which they release some of that moisture. It also helps "set" the skins to prevent them from peeling.

Processing

At the processing plant — a busy scene of conveyor belts, levies and pulls transferring potatoes every which way — potatoes are first washed and dried and then graded, sized and packaged according to size. All this is done via cameras and artificial intelligence that's monitored by a manager in an office. But some processors still use manual labor to pack boxes by hand and lift them onto crates. In fact, it's a point of pride for some.

While the 3-, 5- and 10-pound bags go to the grocery stores, the 50-pound cartons will go to foodservice distributors. Smaller potatoes are sorted out and sent off to become dehydrated potato flakes for use in soups, instant mashed potatoes and other products. Still others are sent off to become our beloved French fries or potato chips.

Shipping

For the most part, foodservice distributors and other buyers maintain regular contracts because they typically know how much product they'll need, Bench says. The majority of potatoes coming out of Idaho are shipped by truck, with the rest by rail, which is cheaper but takes longer to arrive, according to Bench.

The busiest potato-buying seasons are around Thanksgiving and Christmas, as well as other major holidays during the year. "Basically, we'll see a spike in demand whenever people are celebrating," Bench says.

While some crops saw low yields and supply chain issues this past year as a result of the pandemic, potatoes have continued to thrive. "There is so much work and effort that goes into getting the potato from the field to the consumer," Bench says.

KELP RULES

Seaweed is healthful for our bodies and the planet — not to mention it's delicious

// By Lauren Kramer

Kelp is packed with nutrients like magnesium and calcium, plus it's easy on the environment.

You've seen it strewn on the beach or floating in the ocean. You've seen it wrapped around rice and seafood in Japanese eateries. Seaweed is everywhere these days, but how much do you know about its amazing health benefits, along with its culinary potential?

Locally harvested kelp is available in fresh, frozen and fermented forms all over the United States and is one of the most nutrient-dense foods on the planet, packed with calcium, iodine, magnesium, iron and potassium. High in antioxidants, kelp can play a role in combating heart disease and cancer. Kelp is among a few of the only plant-based foods containing eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) omega-3s, which help keep the body's most important organs functioning and healthy at every stage of life.

Where kelp is harvested is key to its health properties. Kelp grown in unregulated, contaminated water can pick up the toxins from that environment, according to **Linda O'Dierno**, education specialist for the National Aquaculture Association. So, when you're consuming imported kelp products, say, in the form of dried seaweed used for sushi rolls, you have no information about where and how it's grown and what contaminants may be present. Locally produced and harvested kelp, however, is regularly monitored for chemical and biological contaminants. O'Dierno notes that most U.S.-farmed products show levels below acceptable standards set by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In addition, she recommends listing seaweed as a potential shellfish allergen on restaurant and food menus because small crustaceans tend to live on the plant in open waters.

Atlantic Sea Farms in Saco, Maine, is an aggregator working with 27 Maine lobster fisheries that farm sugar kelp in the off-season. They grow up to a million pounds of kelp per year and supply to chefs and grocery stores, representing 85% of domestically cultivated kelp. That may sound like a lot of kelp, but it's not, in fact, because 98% of the seaweed consumed in this country is imported. Procuring domestically produced kelp is key to offering your diners a healthy, tasty product.

"We believe ours is the highest quality kelp in the world," says Jesse Baines, chief marketing officer at Atlantic Sea Farms. "It's a sustainable, regenerative crop that requires all the same gear as lobstering, so it helps keep the lobstermen in business year-round. The market potential for locally harvested kelp is huge, and we're working hard to ignite relationships with chefs and introduce them to a new, exciting ingredient. Our kelp creates a positive impact in a time of climate change, and it also supports our coastal economy in Maine."

Baines sees chefs using Atlantic Sea Farms kelp in soups, pasta sauces, pesto, dressings, smoothies, salads and even cocktails. The fast casual chain Sweetgreen launched a Tingly Sweet Potato & Kelp Bowl, while Blue Hill at Stone Barns in Tarrytown, New York, at one point menued a Sugar Kelp "Spinal Chord" dish with rhubarb and turnip kraut. At Little Beet, a vegetarian restaurant with locations in multiple states, Atlantic Sea Farms' ready-cut kelp is a feature in the vegan ranch slaw, while kelp puree is an ingredient in the ranch dressing.

At the French restaurant Chaval in Portland, Maine, **Chef Ilma Lopez** uses sugar kelp in her brioche, canelé desserts, pates, aiolis and cocktails. "We've been using fresh, shredded and powdered kelp for the past three to four years, and we do it because we believe this is a product that's healthy for the diet and good for the

environment," she says. "It's also about supporting our local lobstering industry. If we can use kelp to make amazing dishes, it's a win-win situation for everyone." Chef Lopez adds that she always mentions the inclusion of kelp on her menus and finds that diners are intrigued by it and love the extra layer of flavor and depth it delivers to her cuisine.

New York-based **Chef Marc Murphy** has taken a similar approach. Formerly the owner of Landmark Restaurant, Chef Murphy has added sugar kelp to his grain bowls and his squash soup, and menued both linguine con vongole and bucatini puttanesca with kelp at Landmark. "When people talk about seaweed, they immediately think of Asian flavors, but that's the wrong mindset," he says. "Kelp is just another vegetable, and it doesn't have to be used within the confines of Asian recipes. You can use it as a substitute for spinach or escarole any time."

Murphy compares seaweed's entry into the culinary arena to quinoa and kale. "Fifteen years ago, no one knew what quinoa or kale were, and now they're everywhere," he says. "Seaweed is an ingredient that chefs just need to play around with, and they'll be pleasantly surprised. This is an ingredient people need to get to know, and as chefs who play a large role in setting the trends, it's our responsibility to introduce diners to it. It helps the planet, tastes good and is easy to work with."

Lauren Kramer is an award-winning writer based in the Pacific Northwest. She has been a regular contributor to the National Culinary Review for the past 16 years.

Where to Find Seaweed

- Explore Atlantic Sea Farms' website for recipes and local destinations to purchase kelp products
- If you live in a coastal state and want to procure edible seaweed, visit the National Sea Grant College Program's website at **seagrant.noaa.gov** or reference the program's guide

Kelp can be dehydrated into "chips" for a delicious and healthy snack or as a crunch garnish for dishes.

Classical

ACF member **Janiqua Hunter**, a student at Bishop State Community College in Mobile, Alabama, and a member of the ACF Metro Mobile Chefs and Cooks Association, showcases gumbo, the popular Southern staple, for this piece. "Growing up in Mobile, gumbo was a 'happy dish' for me," she says. "It set a great tone in our household by bringing everyone together in the kitchen. There was music, laughter, good conversations and more than enough helping hands, which resulted in a big pot full of love." Hunter's mother shared her original recipe, which Hunter's sister updated with some of her favorite ingredients and passed onto the family.

Photo credits: Kelvin Cortez

Modern

For the modern treatment, Hunter switched up the technique and plating while keeping many of the ingredients the same. Depending on preference, gumbo can consist of a variety of ingredients such as chicken, sausage, shrimp, blue crabs, lump crab meat, oysters, okra, corn and tomatoes. While ingredients may differ slightly from family to family, the key to the traditional version is a dark roux, flavored stock and 'holy trinity' of celery, onion and bell peppers. The most notable change in Hunter's modern version is battering and frying okra to use as a crispy garnish, rather than as part of the simmering medley. The addition of fresh blue crabs (with their shell on), grilled sweet corn cob medallions and heirloom tomato concasse add a unique smoky flavor, crunchy texture and brighter, more colorful presentation.

See the classical and modern recipes, as well as more photos, at ***wearechefs.com****.*

BLACK HERITAGE CUISINE

A look at some of the ingredients, cooking and farming traditions that make up a core part of American culinary history

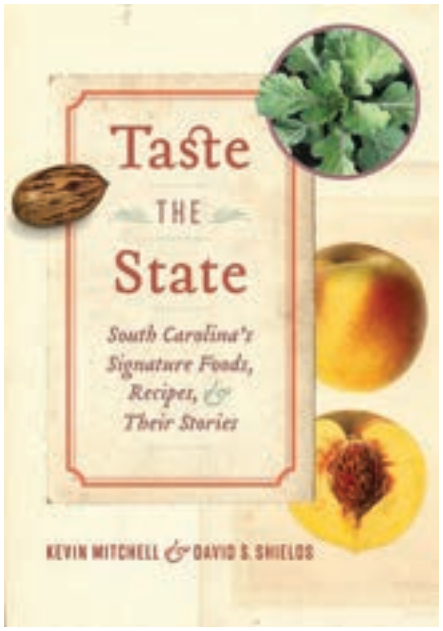
// **Compiled by the Editor**

In honor of Black History Month in February, we wanted to showcase some of our members' personal and heritage stories behind the ingredients, dishes and cooking techniques that make up the fabric of American culinary history.

This is just a snippet of Black heritage cuisine — there are many more stories around food and culinary traditions in Black communities that need to be told. While that's a goal for us editorially this year and beyond, here's a start.

African American culinary history is at its core American history. This is not a new concept for Black Americans and Black chefs, but it can be overlooked by other populations. As more comes out about the African diaspora — for instance, the wildly successful Netflix series "High on the Hog: How African American Cuisine Transformed America" based on Jessica B. Harris' 2012 book "High on the Hog: A Culinary Journey from Africa to America" — it's time to shed more light on how many of the ingredients we use every day have origins in Africa and came to the U.S. because of the slave trade.

What the series, book and experts have said about these "lost stories" is that they're less documented in books, cookbooks and other forms of media because many recipes, cooking styles and traditions in Black communities have



Chef Kevin Mitchell, CEC, CFSE, a well-respected chef and academic collaborated with English literature professor David Shields, on their first book covering Southern Carolina foodways.

"I WANTED TO WRITE ABOUT INGREDIENTS AND DISHES THAT HAVE DISAPPEARED FROM THE CULINARY LANDSCAPE TO SOME DEGREE — INGREDIENTS THAT WERE VERY POPULAR AT ONE POINT BUT THAT ARE NOT BEING CULTIVATED ANYMORE." **-CHEF KEVIN MITCHELL**

historically been passed down orally. Slaves were not allowed to read or write; they had to pass along their traditions by word of mouth. It's no secret that when things were documented, they were often misappropriated.

Longtime **ACF Chef Kevin Mitchell, CEC, CFSE**, a chef-instructor at the Culinary Institute of Charleston in South Carolina, has been trying to document these stories throughout his stellar career. Chef Mitchell is the institute's first African American chef-instructor and an expert on Southern foodways, the preservation of Southern ingredients and the history of African Americans in the culinary arts. Chef Mitchell, a graduate of the Culinary Institute of America who holds a master's degree in southern studies from the University of Mississippi, was named a South Carolina Chef Ambassador in 2020. He is well known for being one of the creators of Nat Fuller's Feast, a 2015 event in Charleston that commemorated the 150th anniversary of the historic feast held by celebrated African American caterer Nat Fuller during which Black and white guests celebrated emancipation.

It was for that event Chef Mitchell first collaborated with **David Shields**, an author and professor of English literature at the University of South Carolina. "It was a no-brainer to team up again," Chef Mitchell says, to co-author "Taste the State: South Carolina's Signature Foods, Recipes and Their Stories." The book, which was released last October, showcases in meticulous detail nearly 100 ingredients and dishes with African, indigenous and other origins that have become an integral part of the cuisine of South Carolina, and consequently, other parts of the United States. From Carolina Gold rice to Sea Island White Flint corn, from the cone-shaped Charleston Wakefield cabbage to signature dishes such as shrimp and grits, chicken bog, okra soup, Frogmore stew and crab rice, "Taste the State" highlights South Carolina's rich food traditions.

From the preface of the book: "Because Carolina cookery combines ingredients and cooking techniques of three divergent cultural

Benne

(Reprinted from "Taste the State: South Carolina's Signature Foods, Recipes and Their Stories" ©2021 with permission from the University of South Carolina Press)

No ingredient epitomized the return of classic flavor to southern cooking in the 2010s more than the revival of benne. Benne biscuits appeared in a multitude of restaurant bread baskets. Benne oil once again lubricated southern greens thanks to Oliver Farm Artisan Oils. Benne and oyster stew sprang from the pages of antique cookbooks to the center of Lowcountry cookery. Gullah Geechee cooks reclaimed parched benne seed as a condiment for rice and for cooked greens. And the traditional benne wafer, a cocktail party fixture in Charleston throughout the twentieth century, was joined by traditional confections such as benne brittle, benne sticks, and benne cakes. I suppose the dirty little secret of the benne revival was that some were using modern crop sesame (cheap and abundant at your local groceries) rather than the original heirloom benne.

Benne is a Mende word for sesame (Sesamum indicum). But the sesame that crossed the Atlantic as part of the African diaspora in the seventeenth century differs from that grown by modern farmers for market and oil processing. Benne is a landrace, tan hulled sesame with an oil content of approximately 45%. Its seed pods ripen at variable times from the bottom to the top of the plant and the pods shatter when ripe, broadcasting the seed. Modern sesame produces seeds with an oil content nearing 60% that is derived from non-shattering pods with a more regulated ripening to enable industrial harvesting.

African peoples of the Gold Coast and Slave Coast used benne seed in myriad ways: as a source for culinary oil; parched and mashed as a condiment; in stews as a flavoring; and milled into flour as a thickening agent and an element of flat breads. Enslaved Africans brought benne seed with them during the crossing and began cultivating it in huck patches for food and medicine (steeping the green leaves in cold water forms a mucilage that soothed gastric upset, particularly in children). Its use as a source of culinary oil immediately attracted the attention of European settlers. Lard, because it entailed the raising of hogs, was expensive. Experiments in olive planting in the American Southeast—and South Carolina particularly—failed because periodic cold snaps killed off olive trees. The need for an inexpensive salad oil and frying medium was great.

Sesame oil, with its long shelf life and high smoke point, became the focus of experiments, and in the 1810s, the basis of oil production that endured until David Wesson refined the stink out of cotton seed oil in the 1880s and created odorless, tasteless Wesson Oil. For sixty years, from 1830 to 1890, cold pressed sesame oil was a Carolina kitchen staple. Now if one asks for sesame oil, one is directed to the Asian food aisle in the grocery and shown dark brown, parched sesame seed oil with a pungent flavor — not at all like the sweet, mellow nuttiness of benne oil.

The sole commercial, cold pressed benne oil producer in the United States is Oliver Farms of Pitts, Georgia, which uses landrace benne supplied by Anson Mills of South Carolina.

In 1820, John S. Skinner, editor of the United States' most important agricultural journal, The American Farmer, observed that "The Bene vine or bush, has been produced for some time, in small quantities, in the southern states, from seed imported directly from Africa . . . Many of the blacks of the Mississippi have continued the propagation of the seed of the Bene, and make soup of it after parching. The seed may be procured from them and from the blacks in the Carolinas and Georgia."

The sole surviving recipe for benne soup appeared as a variation of groundnut soup in Sarah Rutledge's 1847 The Carolina Housewife. Though attentive to local vernacular cookery, Rutledge's collection was intended for a White readership with meat and seafood at its disposal. Oysters are added to benne and flour to make a dish that survives in Lowcountry cuisine as "Brown Oyster and Benne Stew."

traditions, there is more than a little novelty and variety in our food. It has inspired praise from visitors to the state since the 1720s. Because "fakelore surrounds food that becomes important to places, we have taken care to supply the best documented information. You won't read here that pine bark stew contains pine bark or that collards came from Africa. Other foods that were once famous have passed into legend, no longer available. We remember several of these: groundnut cakes, rice birds, and tanya root."

The idea for the book came through Shields, who was approached by the publisher to write a book featuring some of the most popular South Carolina dishes. "David wanted to do something more comprehensive than that, and he wanted to write this book with a chef," Chef Mitchell says. "He wanted someone who was heavily involved in academia and who was a culinary historian with a chef's point of view — and he found me. There were well over 100 ingredients and dishes that we had on our initial list that we wanted to write about, but we had to cut some of those out for space."

Chef Mitchell had three main goals for the book. "I wanted to write about ingredients and dishes that people from all across the South would recognize as synonymous with South Carolina," he says. "I also wanted to write about ingredients and dishes that have disappeared from the culinary landscape to some degree — ingredients that were very popular at one point but that are not being cultivated anymore." Finally, Chef Mitchell wanted to include ingredients originally from South Carolina that people not from the area would never think originated there.

As the wildly popular Netflix show "High on the Hog" showcased, there are many ingredients that arrived in the U.S. from Africa via the slave trade. Slaves stuffed rice, benne seeds, okra seeds and even African runner peanuts in whatever bag they might have been carrying — or even sometimes in their hair. The seeds were then planted and cultivated on American shores. "Most people think of Virginia when they think about peanuts, but the African runner peanut is still being grown here in South Carolina," Chef Mitchell says. "We wanted to give a nod to those influences, not only African Africans, but also from Native Americans, the Dutch, the English and others who brought or cultivated those particular ingredients here in this area." For their research, Chef Mitchell and Shields scoured newspaper clippings and any recipes they could find from the 1700s onward to study the evolution of ingredients and dishes throughout history.

For that surprise element, Chef Mitchell points to the humble asparagus (aka the Palmetto), the very first

Chef Kevin Mitchell, CEC, CFSE (left) and David Shields, co-authors of "Taste the State: South Carolina's Signature Foods, Recipes & Their Stories" released last October.

ingredient in the book. "As a French-trained chef from the CIA originally from New Jersey, there was no way I thought asparagus would have ties to South Carolina," he says. "But South Carolina is actually a major growing state for the crop that's shipped north." According to the book, Manhattan millionaires of the Gilded Age made asparagus the country's most cherished vegetable in 1880. South Carolina's signature plump Palmetto asparagus was favored prior to the rise of skinnier spears in the 1920s. The Palmetto variety was discovered almost by accident by a New York seedsman who dispatched a vegetable grower in South Carolina to plant the crop, noting that it yielded better in the temperate climate of the Southern state.

The South Carolina origins of oranges also surprised Chef Mitchell. "I don't think about South Carolina in the same sentence as oranges; I always thought about Florida, the sunshine state," Chef Mitchell says. "It's our hope that when people read this book, they will get some of those surprises I did and say, 'Wow, this is fascinating.'"

Food, Family and Farming: A Q&A with Chef-Farmers Matthew and Tia Raiford

There has been an extraordinary loss of Black agrarians and land as a result of institutional racism and other forces, according to Gail Meyers, Ph.D., a cultural anthropologist, founder of Farm to Grow, Inc., and creator of the documentary "Rhythms of the Land" (released in October 2021). Meyers has been researching, teaching and writing about Black farmers for nearly two decades. In 1920, there were more than 926,000 Black farmers in America, according to her research. But by 2017, there were just over 33,000 Black farmers. This has subsequently led to a "loss of wisdom, stories and narratives" over the course of nearly 100 years, she has said. On a more positive note, a group of remaining farmers has been working hard to preserve ingredients and farming traditions that the greater American public (knowingly or not) can take for granted.

ACF Chef Matthew Raiford, author of "Bress 'n' Nyam: Gullah Geechee Recipes from a Sixth-Generation Farmer," released last year, is one such farmer. A graduate of the Culinary Institute of America, Chef Raiford returned to his roots in Georgia to farm his sixth-generation farm with his sister, Althea Raiford, and his wife, Tia Raiford (also a chef and CIA graduate). The organic family farm was first established in 1874 by Chef Matthew Raiford's great-great-great-grandfather Jupiter Gilliard, a freed slave. The Raiford family owns 30 of the original 476 acres. Most recently, the Raifords have begun building a nonprofit educational program, Jupiter's Harvest, as part of Strong Roots 9, the farm's holding company, with the hopes of teaching young people about sustainable farming. We caught up with Chef Matthew Raiford and **Chef Tia Raiford**, who comes from a farming community in Montgomery, Alabama, to learn more.

NCR: What has your focus been when it comes to teaching about farming and the culinary arts?

MR: One of the things we've been focused on is the intersection of farming, family and food. We have distanced ourselves somewhat from the past and our heritage, and now we're trying to get back to it. We had a schoolhouse on our farm that was built in 1907, so until about 1955, African Americans within a 20-mile radius came to the school to learn about sustainable farming.

TR: The school has been part of farm education for decades; what we're doing now is completing the circle. We try to teach about the culinary arts through a 'stem-to-table' approach. We focus on educating children about healthy food and trying to make that connection through culinary. Matthew and I first met while we were focused on the culinary side of things, but as our lives have grown, we both have come back to the farm in some form or fashion. You have to understand where food comes from on a personal and professional level in order to know how to grow it, preserve it, sell it and ultimately cook it.

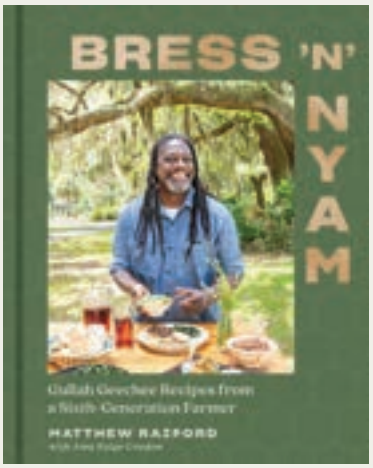
MR: That's true. One of the hallmarks of our heritage is you're only going to grow what you can sell, cook or preserve. A newly freed Jupiter Gilliard bought 476 acres of land in 1874 for $9 in taxes, but it was worth so much more because he finally had access to his own food. We were taught how to think about the many things we can make out of a carrot, for example. We can use the leaves for salad or to make carrot pesto; we can use the stems and trim for stock and cook the main part of the carrot every which way. There was no such thing as waste. My grandma would have a jar of mayonnaise with barely any left in it, and she would say, 'We're going to use what's left and then use that jar.' You didn't just throw glass away.

NCR: How would you describe the mission or vision behind Jupiter's Harvest?

TR: Our vision is a two-pronged approach. We look at using Gilliard Farms as a central location for developing programs and inviting interns and schools or groups to learn how to farm, and we also work with curriculum developers to integrate technology, arts and math into that learning at the school level.

NCR: Have you worked with any schools formally yet?

MR: We just finished helping the Ferguson-Florissant School District in the St. Louis area start their agro-culinary program, which we hope to duplicate for other schools. There were regular calls with



the curriculum folks for almost six months to figure out what the schools were looking for and what they could produce. Part of the curriculum is on seed saving and how using open pollinated seeds can help create a diverse food population. We also teach about aquaponics and hydroponics and rooftop gardens. Water management is also important — the understanding of how to get water from here to there — and also about how to pay attention to disease and naturally boost the calcium content of your soil and how to use compost. We also talk about wildcrafting. On our farm, we can access lion's mane mushrooms growing on trees and beautyberry, motherwort and lemongrass; these indigenous ingredients can be used for teas and tinctures for their anti-inflammatory properties. We save the seeds — the average flower has between 20 and 30 seeds in each pod — to grow more the next year, and we also dry and grind down the leaves for powders. None of these are new concepts; we're just bringing back what we've been taught by our family.

TR: I was raised in the North, but I come from a family of farmers outside of Montgomery, Alabama, and I learned many of these practices. When I returned to my family's land, I found out through my family that I am also a descendant of slaves from 1820 near the same county where Matthew's family is from. This connection to food and history has always been deep-rooted for me.

MR: But there's been a washing away of some of our history to some degree. If you talk to Black folks in California or the East Coast and ask them about their roots, many will say Alabama or Mississippi. Industrialization changed things; buildings and railroads needed to be built. That caused food to move. That meant there needed to be more helping hands to move the food. Blacks have always been part of that because cooking is not unskilled labor; butchery is not unskilled labor. Food migration and Black migration in this country are the same thing if you think about it. Back in the days, people wanted a skilled Black cook who could cook French cuisine. These were amazing cooks who were not allowed to read or write. We were also the ones growing the food. But this was all knowledge that we had that was passed down only orally.

NCR: What was your experience going to culinary school already knowing so many cooking techniques and traditions?

TR: When Matthew and I met at culinary school, we didn't see many others who looked like us. Our role model was Jacques Pepin.

MR: When I went to culinary school, I learned about mornay sauce. I thought to myself at the time, 'You mean macaroni and cheese like my mama makes?' My dad was a baker by trade, and we'd sit around watching bake-off competitions on TV, and my dad would say, 'They're making yule logs? I was doing that when I was 16.' There are also a lot of misnomers of what we eat. I once had someone ask, 'Why do you put pork in everything?' We do, but that was because there was no other source of protein. Slaves got the ham hock, not the ham. You put that in a pot of black eyed peas with rice, and that's the only source of meat that would last for days. I have had people think all I grew up eating was fried chicken. Why would I kill a chicken that can only feed 3 to 4 people just for one meal? A hen lays an egg every day; that's 21 ounces, roughly, of protein from that animal every week. We ate fried chicken only for festive times, like when somebody got married. And it was an old bird, an old biddy, and you either had to cook it down for dumpling stew or marinate it for a couple days and then fry it. I don't remember my grandmother ever grabbing a chicken that was 8 to 12 weeks old just to fry it. There are so many stereotypes of what our culture eats.

TR: That's why in order for us to move forward, these stories of our past need to be a part of the conversation around American culture. When we get too far away from history, it causes stereotypes, wastefulness, ignorance, misunderstanding and confusion. When we take care of what we're connected to, we can reconcile and rejuvenate communities.

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Chef Pamela Bedford, CCE

Director of Culinary Arts, Eastside High School, Gainesville, Florida // By Amelia Levin

Though she has children of her own, the 2021 ACF Chef Educator of the Year, **Pamela Bedford**, still refers to her students as "her kids." It's not meant to be patronizing , but rather, an endearing term that has naturally come about over the course of her 15-year tenure at Gainesville, Florida's Eastside High School, where she serves as director of the school's revered Institute of Culinary Arts.

EARLY YEARS

Chef Bedford first knew she wanted to work in the food industry after watching the joy her Italian grandfather got out of feeding their family.

"He would be in the kitchen wearing his big red apron slinging pizza all night long, and it was incredible to see how easily everyone gravitated toward him in the kitchen," she says. "I thought, 'Wow, look at how popular you are when you can cook!' It's so embarrassing to admit that, but it's the honest truth. The social aspect of cooking really got me hooked."

Her aspirations to cook were solidified when she found herself "dragging her feet" when it came time to fill out college applications during her senior year of high school. "My mom was losing patience with me, and I burst into tears saying, 'I just want to be a chef!'"

To Chef Bedford's surprise, her parents were very supportive. They encouraged her to get a job at a restaurant, and if she enjoyed it, to go on to culinary school. She did both, graduating from the Lincoln Culinary Institute, formerly known as the Florida Culinary Institute, in West Palm Beach, Florida.

Chef Bedford clocked 12 years in the industry before moving into education. She worked at various restaurants during school, and upon graduation, served as a catering manager for Chartwells. She even took a job as chef at a sorority house at the University of Florida in Gainesville, which she says was one of the most fun jobs she has ever had. It was the closest thing to running a bed and breakfast — a dream at one point. The day-to-day grind eventually got to her, and on the cusp of burnout, Chef Bedford decided to look into culinary education. "I thought, 'Wouldn't it be cool to help kids learn culinary skills?' Because when I was in high school, there was no program like that," she says.

TRANSITIONING TO TEACHING

When Chef Bedford learned about the culinary program at Eastside High School, the school was coincidentally looking for a teacher. "I had zero teaching experience, but I did have experience in just about every other type of chef job, as well as front-of-the-house experience," she says. After taking some education courses, Chef Bedford started the job in the fall of 2007 and has been there ever since.

"I can't imagine doing anything else," she says, noting that perhaps education was always in her blood, having had a grandmother who was a home economics teacher. Eastside offers a four-year magnet program that recruits applicants of all backgrounds from the various public schools in the area. In order to apply, applicants must maintain a certain GPA, write an essay and not have a disciplinary record.

"I get to select 75% of the students, and the other 25% comes from a lottery system," Chef Bedford says. She rarely has to turn anyone away, but if she does, always offers the opportunity to reapply the following year. The students take five two-hour classes each week in addition to their regular general studies, and they're bussed to the institute from all over Alachua County. Students learn culinary arts fundamentals, as well as safety and sanitation, nutrition and more.

Left: Chef Pamela Bedford with her husband and children in Walt Disney World after winning the Chef Educator of the Year Award at the 2021 ACF National Convention in Orlando, Florida; Right: Chef Bedford displaying her gold medal from the win.

Chef Bedford also enjoys teaching about global cuisines and all the different career paths in food and culinary. She's brought in alumni to talk about the different jobs they have gone on to; graduates include a recipe developer for magazines and TV, a chef for NASA and several people who run their own businesses. Chef Bedford is not one to say "no" when the kids want to try something new — as long as the project does not involve a flamethrower or cost a fortune. "A lot of times, they'll see something on Instagram or TikTok and ask if they can try it in the classroom," she says. "We recently developed a Japanese pancake and dalgona coffee and had the best time. Social media is never going to go away, so if they are inspired by something they see, we can always try new things. The hardest part for me is that I teach the same kids for four years, so I never want to duplicate things."

When asked how she enjoys working with teenagers day in and day out, she says, "It's easy; I have worked with hundreds of kids, and I get to help them realize their dreams. I have gotten the first call when some of my kids got accepted to the CIA (Culinary Institute of America) or Johnson & Wales or when they get their first job. I had one student even win 'Chopped' on the Food Network, and he went on to be a chef at a James Beard dinner and called me to invite me." Last year, Chef Bedford had a student who suddenly changed her mind about the program, but Chef Bedford encouraged her to stick it out and give it a try. The student ended up wanting to stay.

TAKING HOME THE WIN

At the 2021 ACF National Convention in Orlando, Florida, Chef Bedford beat out three other culinary educators in a cooking competition to take home the top honor as ACF Chef Educator of the Year. A colleague had encouraged her to apply even though she didn't feel equipped to compete. Still, Chef Bedford gave it a try, encouraged by the fact that she hit all the marks on the paper application alone. Not long after, she was selected as a finalist and then, "I found myself on a main stage competing. I am not going to lie, during the walk from my room to the main stage, I was thinking about how much I didn't want to do this." Then, the lights came on and someone gave her a microphone. She immediately turned on her teaching persona and had a blast.

For her winning dish, Chef Bedford demonstrated an elevated shrimp and grits to represent the South. She also had to prepare a written lesson plan ahead of time for the judges, which consisted of a panel of educators, as well as students from the ACF Young Chefs Club. After winning the award, Chef Bedford was covered by several local media outlets and even received a letter of congratulations from U.S. Rep. Kat Cammack of the 3rd District in Florida.

"What keeps me going every day are my kids," Chef Bedford says. "I even took a group with me to the national convention, and they got to help with some of the other competitions taking place. I hope to do the same next year at the convention in Vegas. This is what I love about the ACF — there are so many amazing opportunities to take advantage of. I went out there and did something I wasn't sure about, and it worked out well for me. I try to instill that notion of saying 'yes' to every opportunity in my kids because you never know what that 'yes' will get you, even if you're unsure."

Problem Solvers Always Have a Job

Changing times determine what happens in the kitchen for research and development chefs // By Jody Shee

If the pandemic has done nothing else positive, it has highlighted the troubleshooting skills of research and development chefs. After all, isn't necessity the mother of invention? R&D practitioners discover needs, wants and challenges and go to work on solutions.

Research and development chef is a broad term. The role doesn't necessarily require a degree in food science or culinology, which blends culinary arts with food science, says **Chef Jaime Mestan**, regional director culinary of North America for Griffith Foods in Alsip, Illinois, and president of the Research Chefs Association.

One company may offer the title R&D chef, while another may name the position corporate chef, nutritionist, culinary technologist or lab technologist, Chef Mestan says. She knows some foodservice distributors hire chefs to work on product development but call them corporate chefs. "Titles are an interesting dilemma we are trying to work through."

A chef's industry experience is what matters to companies looking for a specific skill and experience set. Myriad chefs lost their jobs throughout the pandemic. Those chefs may find that the knowledge, experience and skills they bring to their next position will land them a job title of R&D chef. What differentiates an R&D chef job is the way the chefs collaborate with others in the industry to develop solutions for challenges that impact everyone.

Coming together

During the height of the pandemic when delivery became the foodservice modus operandi, soggy French fries showed up at the door of households everywhere. Research chefs started working with packaging companies, equipment manufacturers, delivery people, potato farmers, manufacturers and seasoning companies to address the problem, Chef Mestan says. "That's all new skills and knowledge for us."

When companies hire an R&D chef, they first look for those with "a strong culinary foundation with an ability to translate a gold-standard product into a commercialized one, whether that be a beverage, sandwich or granola bar," Chef Mestan says. "But also, there's a need for an openness for learning and collaboration. That's a soft skill. You need to work in a team setting." The restaurant brigade system doesn't work in an R&D chef's world. "That's a mindset that won't get far in this job."

Chef Jamie Mestan, regional director culinary of North America for Griffith Foods, Alsip, Illinois, and president of the Research Chefs Association.

Quick adaptation to industry changes brings out the need and desire for food industry cooperation across the supplier, vendor, chef and food company spectrum, Chef Mestan says. Most recently, the Food and Drug Administration issued a directive for the food industry to reduce sodium. Per the FDA, "The Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025 recommends limiting sodium intake to 2,300 mg per day for people 14 years and older; and even less for those 13 years and younger." The edict sent waves throughout the food industry. "There is total collaboration for the industry to be on the front end of this," Chef Mestan says. "Everyone is trying to help."

Labor shortage means adjusting

The labor shortage is another lens through which R&D chefs currently look at food items, dishes, menus and food concepts.

In his position as corporate R&D chef for Morrison Healthcare, a part of Compass Group North America, **Chef Jay Ziobrowski, CEC**, stays on top of consumer and foodservice market trends while he spearheads product development. He oversees the retail side of the health care group with a focus on reimagining concepts that will utilize ingredients that are easy to secure, that will yield clean labels and that can be accomplished without scratch cooking, given staffing shortages. For example, he has worked on a New Orleans-style concept developing easy-to-execute dishes. He looks for vendor-supplied products to help create the dishes, which include an already prepared etouffee sauce.

Chef Ziobrowski's pandemic market research has shown that consumers, and thus the foodservice industry, are favoring comfort food. However, to keep things interesting, he's researching ways to add a twist. For a comfort food mashup, he developed dill pickle-spiced boiled-peanut hummus. "We're focusing on Southern cuisine and crossing it with Mediterranean to make it American cuisine." He calls it "semi-homemade" since the recipe begins with pre-made supplier-sourced hummus.

He loves his job, having recently joined Morrison Healthcare after working for a whole grain, rice and legumes supplier. Chef Ziobrowski was looking for a job that offered growth, that gave and used industry knowledge and that allowed him to travel more. He recently presented at a Compass event in Washington, D.C., that brought together Compass menu executives and key suppliers. "We said what we need and what we see the future to be and looked to build partnerships with vendors," he says.

Chef Ziobrowski especially enjoys working with the marketing department on market research to discover consumer needs and desires. Local/seasonal always rises to the top, thus leading the company to "menu with intention." That is, focusing on what the indigenous people of the land eat, which embraces local, seasonal and what's on hand. "You're in Minnesota. There's a fine line. Do you want to eat strawberries from another region? Or do you want to eat local? If you're passionate about local, learn to do research and development," he says.

Chef Jaime Mestan participated in The RCA Event at the CIA in Copia that brought together research chefs and industry professionals for hands-on training in techniques, cuisines and ingredients.

Left: Chef Chris Tanner, CEC, CCA, AAC, research chef for Rubix Foods, formerly called Darifair Foods, Jacksonville, Florida. Right: Chef Tanner helped develop the foam for the cold brew for a major coffee chain.

Vendors help restaurants

When food companies develop components that can simplify a restaurant's dish or beverage, it's the food company R&D chef's job as liaison to translate the qualities of that product to the restaurant chef. It's one of the elements of Chef Christopher Tanner's job that he loves the most. **Chef Tanner, CEC, CCE, AAC**, is a research chef for Rubix Foods, formerly called Darifair Foods, in Jacksonville, Florida. The company focuses on dairy- and non-dairy-based products such as sauces, glazes, compound butters and sweet fillings.

He calls his product development philosophy "one plus one: my product plus another to create another for versatility," he says. "It might take 15 ingredients, but only two products for the final solution."

Chef Tanner also works with chain restaurant accounts to help them with new items or LTOs. For example, for the fall, a major coffee chain launched a pumpkin spice cold foam cold brew with the end goal being to develop a foam to commercialize as an aerosol that chain units could use back of house. The foam had to have the right sweetness level to balance with the coffee; an ideal foam would also slowly mix with the coffee, rather than just sit on top. Rubix Foods developed 10 versions of cold foam from which the client could choose. "At the end of the day, you let go of your ego. They might not pick the one you love," Chef Tanner says.

Chef Tanner has also worked with a major burger chain looking to launch a new burger that was unique but also highly craveable. The result called on a pimento cheese-like spread for the comfort factor, Chef Tanner says. "Regular pimento cheese isn't the best for a burger, with its large shreds. It had to have the right texture and mouthfeel for the burger." He developed a few renditions as samples from which the client chose one.

Ghost kitchens may be the next frontier — spaces where it would be especially appropriate to consult R&D chefs, Chef Tanner says. He believes that overall, R&D chef positions will continue to grow as more entities look to provide consumers with meals away from home, at home, fresh, frozen, vegan and beyond.

Jody Shee is a Kauai, Hawaii-based freelance writer and editor with more than 25 years of food-writing experience. She blogs at sheefood.com.

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GRANDMA'S HANDS

Stories and lessons learned from two strong African American women in my life

// By Chef Ashten M. Garrett

As in most families, culinary stories often begin with Grandma. When I was attending culinary school, one of my chef-instructors asked the class why we were interested in cooking. As we went around the room, it was no surprise that many of the responses began with "my grandmother" or "a family member" when talking about who inspired each student to pursue the culinary arts. When it was my turn to speak, I stood up and said, "I cannot state why or how it began, but I have been inspired by everything in the kitchen since I was a young boy." At that moment, I felt pride but also a sense of alienation from my own culture. On one hand, I understood that food was within me and that I was eager to learn more about it. On the other, I was disheartened not knowing how I was linked to it. Discovering more about my family's roots, lineage and culture became the utmost priority to me. In my quest to do so, I discovered that the inspiration to cook first came from my grandmothers.

Luckily, my mother had already taken on the assignment of learning more about our family's roots. As history would tell it, the easiest method to get information about a previous event is to find the eldest and most trustworthy person to recall their experience firsthand. Before unveiling her history project to the family, my mother made it a point to do some independent research on her own using various historical resources. After gathering all that she could find, it was then that she began talking to our family members, beginning with both of my grandmothers. My excitement in their stories grew as I overheard conversations with her and some of my relatives on the phone, discussing that one of my great-great-grandfathers was responsible for assisting slaves in the underground railroad. Or how the "little red book," a recipe book that has been passed down in my family for the past four generations, was first conceived. As I sat back and watched our family tree begin to be unveiled name by name, story by story, it became apparent that knowing more about your family is the key to knowing more about food.

On my metaphorical right hand, Miss Johnsene Compton, or Grammie as I called her, is a gentle, loving, generous and comforting woman famously known for her delicious apple crisp. She always urged my brother and me to explore the value of unconditional love and stressed the importance that everything created here on earth was to be respected. That virtue often served its purpose when it came to avoiding wasting food. The importance of innovation out of necessity is a concept that is countlessly adopted and retold in the African American community. After conversing with other family members, I learned that when an animal is killed in an African village, every aspect of that animal is utilized. In return, the villagers will plant seeds for new trees or raise new animals. The notion of giving and receiving rather than giving to receive was something I had to relearn. Stories like these aren't just stories; they

are history lessons. And family reunions for me weren't just celebrations: They became seminars.

As I reflected on the importance I had as a chef, I began to understand that one of the many services that I can provide for the community at large is being diligent about waste and understanding the impact it has on the global community. Through this consistent practice, I am often reminded of the many food and cultural inventions that my ancestors have created that lent themselves to the survival of many common and famous foods, as well as culinary techniques this nation celebrates today.

On my metaphorical left hand, My Aunt Barbara (who is not technically my grandmother by blood) is a lively and passionate, warm-hearted woman who is responsible for introducing my taste buds to the decadent richness of her famous fudge brownies. She, like Grammie, also carried a strong belief in reducing waste, but she taught me more about the spirit and potential of food. Aunt Barbara could look at a piece of squash that was rotting and think about how she could turn that into a meal. Within 45 minutes, the smell of zucchini bread would be permeating throughout her home. She can look past the face value of an ingredient and see it for its true potential — a worldview she also applied to people. No matter the circumstance, or how rotten by life one could be, my Aunt Barbara's comforting voice and aura can make anyone believe in themselves and their ability to achieve good. In my line of work within luxury fine dining, if an element may not be at its best, it's not even considered and immediately discarded. Appreciating and respecting the sacrifice an ingredient has made to make its way onto a plate is something that I hope I will pass on to others.

Both of my grandmothers have played an integral role in my development as a young man. The beauty of having two strong and powerful African American women in my life who shared their history, life lessons and love with me is something I will always cherish. Whenever I am cooking something, I will always take comfort in knowing that no matter how far away I am or wherever my life's journey will take me, the spirit and lessons of my grandmothers are right there in my hands.

Food Network's "Guy's Grocery Games" winner Ashten Garrett is an ACF chef, a food and sustainability activist and immediate past president of the ACF's Young Chefs Club. Born and raised in Akron, Ohio, Chef Ashten received his associate's and bachelor's degrees from Johnson & Wales University, graduating summa cum laude. After traveling through Italy, Spain and France to cultivate his palate and refine his culinary skills, Chef Ashten now works as chef de partie at the Ritz-Carlton, Cleveland. Learn more at www.chefashten.com.

"STORIES LIKE THESE AREN'T JUST STORIES; THEY ARE HISTORY LESSONS. AND FAMILY REUNIONS FOR ME WEREN'T JUST CELEBRATIONS: THEY BECAME SEMINARS."

– **Chef Ashten M. Garrett**

FOR THE LOVE OF CHOCOLATE

Knowing how chocolate is produced — or even making your own — is the key to truly appreciating this complex ingredient

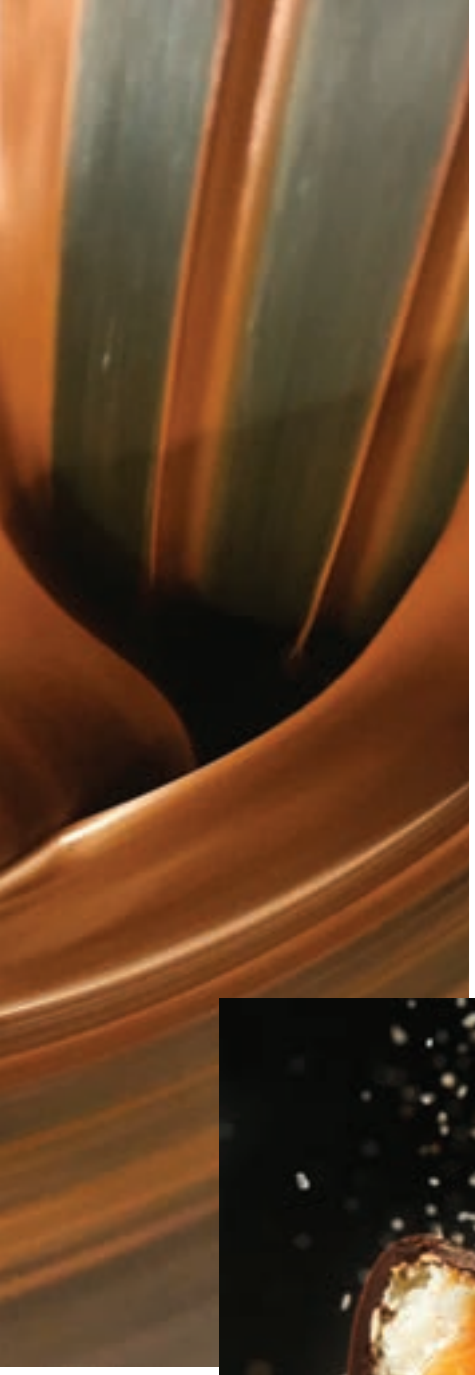
// By Robert Wemischner

Top of the spread: Cacao beans, after being ground into a paste called "liquor," swirls about in a melangeur used in the refining stage (credit: Chef Michael Laiskonis); Middle: The salted caramel macaroon from Michelle's Maccs in New York; Bottom: Finished chocolate made by Chef Laiskonis, an instructor at the Institute of Culinary Education's Chocolate Lab in New York (credit: Laiskonis).

Chocolate-making and chocolate education today are all about origin, process and the story — not unlike the way we've come to understand more about heirloom vegetables, biodynamic wines and coffee.

"With so many farm-produced items featured on restaurant menus, we have a well-established farm-to-table ethos, but chocolate needs to be included in that story," says Chef Michael Laiskonis, who serves as creative director of the Institute of Culinary Education (ICE) in New York City and oversees ICE's Chocolate Lab. "There is a huge education gap, and professionals need to move the needle on disseminating the real story to other professionals in the field and teaching them about the growing and production side of the cacao bean at origin. What I find most gratifying is bringing pastry chefs and chocolatiers into the [ICE bean-to-bar] chocolate lab to give them an understanding of the global industry, and then hoping that they take that information back into the world."

Lauren Adler, vice president of the board for the Fine Chocolate Industry Association and a chocolate consultant who leads private tastings and corporate events, says that when it comes to chocolate, it's all about terroir.



"THESE ARE THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF THE INDUSTRY. AND THE CHOCOLATE-EATING PUBLIC SHOULD BE EDUCATED MORE ABOUT THE PRODUCTION PROCESSES TO GAIN A GREATER APPRECIATION FOR WHAT GOES INTO A WELL-MADE CHOCOLATE."

- LAUREN ADLER
VICE PRESIDENT, FINE CHOCOLATE INDUSTRY OF AMERICA

"We need to educate the consumer's palate and to get people to think about chocolate as a terroir-driven product, reflecting the taste of nature where the cacao bean is grown and work toward supporting each link in the chain of chocolate product, from farmer to fermenter, from roaster to concher and finally to the chocolate artist into whose hands the finished product arrives, ripe with possibility."

Adler points to Fu Wan Chocolate in Taiwan and Fossa Chocolate in Singapore as notable examples of chocolate producers who are fermenting cacao beans in the field. She sees a pressing need to support the growers to enable them to ferment the beans in the fields like this, which has a major impact on the dominant flavor of the chocolate (visit **WeAreChefs.com** for a more in-depth look at the chocolate making process, from bean to bar).

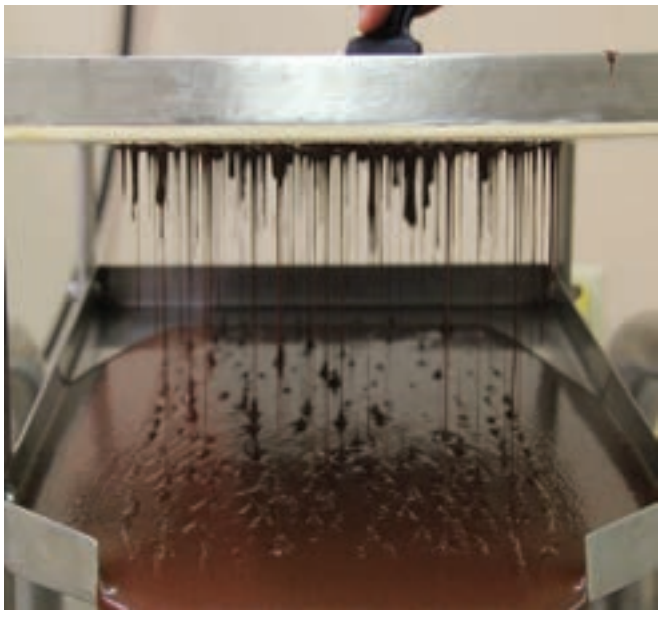
"Post-harvest processing is the leading factor in the ultimate flavor in the chocolate," Adler says. "Any off flavors in the chocolate result from less-than-ideal conditions for fermentation. These are the nuts and bolts of the industry. And the chocolate-eating public should be educated more about the production processes to gain a greater appreciation for what goes into a well-made chocolate."

"THE CHARACTER OF COCOA BUTTER THAT IS THE BACKBONE OF CHOCOLATE'S FLAVOR CAN VARY WIDELY FROM ONE GROWING REGION AND GROWER TO ANOTHER."

- RICHARD TANGO-LOWY
OWNER, DANCING LION CHOCOLATE

The act of roasting cacao beans and then turning those into bars of chocolate is not something that's easy or practical for most chocolate shops to achieve, Chef Laiskonis says, so most chocolatiers and chefs will source the already-made bar. Chef Laiskonis, a pastry chef, roasts his own beans primarily for educational purposes. He encourages other pastry chefs to learn more about the complex chocolate-making process to "have a deeper respect for the end product." Since it's not easy to make chocolate from "bean-to-bar" in-house, he suggests collaborating with artisan chocolate makers when there's a desire to tell more of the origin story. Some smaller-scale roasting and cacao bean processing equipment is available for those looking to make their own chocolate.

Richard Tango-Lowy, owner of Dancing Lion Chocolate in Manchester, New Hampshire, is one such chocolatier. As a trained material scientist, Tango-Lowy roasts cacao beans in-house and then processes them using two 10-kilogram grinders. "We get to play with interesting primary materials, which lend their own nuanced flavors to



Top left: A conching machine used in the final step of chocolate making to further refine the ground cacao beans and cocoa butter into smooth chocolate (credit: Chef Laiskonis); Bottom left: Sifting finished chocolate until smooth at the ICE's Chocolate Lab; Bottom right: Raw cacao beans from Peru (credit: Chef Laiskonis).

the bonbon line we produce in our shop," he says.

As consumers understand more about the chocolate production process (and more chocolatiers and chefs educate them about it), common myths about chocolate are more apt to be busted.

"We are disproving the myths that all milk chocolates need to be super sweet, or that white chocolate is merely sweet and bland," says Tango-Lowy. "The character of cocoa butter that is the backbone of chocolate's flavor can vary widely from one growing region and grower to another. This information, too, helps to educate and sell chocolates way beyond what elsewhere passes for artisanally made."

For a look at what some ACF chefs are doing with chocolate today, visit **WeAreChefs.com**.

Robert Wemischner is a longtime instructor of professional baking at Los Angeles Trade-Technical College and the author of four books, including "The Dessert Architect."

Michelle Goldberg, owner of Michelle's Maccs in New York City, imports fair trade coconut from the Philippines for her chocolate-enrobed macaroons.

Chocolate Trends Today

Local Influences. At The Lodge at Spruce Peak in Stowe, Vermont, pastry chef Jessica Quiet enjoys putting new spins on chocolate-based desserts and confections that are inspired by the lodge's location at the base of a ski mountain. She elevates s'mores by using house-made chocolate graham crackers; she also fashions chocolate bombs in lieu of basic marshmallows for hot cocoa. "Seasonally, I also pair apple pate de fruit (fruit paste) made from locally grown apples with milk chocolate and honey," Chef Quiet says. "Being in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont, where dairy and farmers market produce is plentiful for some of the year, I love featuring those ingredients in my products, all of which are made without machines, purely by hand."

Global Flavors. Chef Quiet often looks to spices for inspiration when it comes to working with chocolate. "I'm partial to using smoked honey in the ganache fillings of my bonbons and five-spice powder to flavor my cranberry bonbons," she says. "Reaching into the Japanese ingredient pantry, I also use togarashi, the fragrant spice powder made of chili, poppy seeds, white sesame seeds, yuzu peel and other flavors, to add sparkle to my citrus curd interiors."

Free From. Other trending chocolates and infusions of note are those that are free of gluten, dairy, soy and genetically modified ingredients. Michelle Goldberg, owner of Michelle's Maccs in New York City, sources fair trade coconut from the Philippines, which she then enrobes in chocolate for a gluten-free chewy coconut macaroon. Flavors include standard coconut with milk and dark chocolate, as well as fruit-forward varieties like amarena cherry, key lime and orange zest, plus salted caramel, peanut butter and espresso.

NCR Quiz

January/February 2022

By LeeAnn Corrao, CFC®

Burger Boss is connecting with what demographic to work and train in their establishments?

a. High school students
b. Incarcerated individuals
c. Culinarians who lost their jobs during the pandemic
d. Individuals living below the median income for their area

Which of the following is not a component of Groundwork Kitchen's program?

a. Life skills training
b. Culinary skills training
c. Hands-on experience
d. Management and supervisory skills

Research and development chefs are sometimes referred to as _____.

a. Culinary technologists
b. Lab technologists
c. Corporate chefs
d. All of the above

Chef Ziobrowski's pandemic market research has shown that consumers, and thus the foodservice industry, are favoring _____.

a. International cuisines
b. Fine dining
c. Comfort foods
d. Vegetarian and vegan products

What is kofta?

a. Meatballs mixed with spices and/or onions
b. A strained yoghurt infused with spices
c. Eggs poached in a tomato sauce
d. A curry with lamb and chicken

What percentage of seaweed consumed in the United States is imported?

a. 55%
b. 72%
c. 89%
d. 98%

Kelp contains _____ which helps keep the body's most important organs functioning and healthy at every stage of life.

a. Alpha-linolenic acid
b. Eicosapentaenoic acid
c. Docosahexaenoic acid
d. Benzoic acid

How does Chef Hegsted recommend cooking a tender cut of lamb?

a. Baked
b. Grilled
c. Roasted
d. Sous-vide

The word scottadita means _____.

a. Little lamb
b. Grilled lamb
c. Burned fingers
d. Finger food

When do farmers in Idaho begin planting potatoes?

a. Mid-March
b. At the end of April
c. Early summer
d. Whenever they want

Why are Fu Wan Chocolate in Taiwan and Fossa Chocolate in Singapore notable chocolate producers?

a. They ferment cacao beans in the field
b. They have sustainable growing practices
c. They roast the beans immediately upon harvesting
d. They air roast the cacao beans

What influences the flavor of chocolate?

a. The growing region of the cacao beans
b. Post-harvest processing
c. Type of cacao bean
d. All of the above

What are the two main types of russet potatoes grown in Idaho?

a. Norkotah and Canela
b. Goldrush and Ranger
c. Burbank and Goldrush
d. Burbank and Norkotah

See the rest of the questions, finish the quiz and earn four CEHs toward your certification on ACF's new Online Learning Center at acfchefs.org/olc.

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- Examples from Chefs in the Industry

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