Johnson & Wales University

FIT SYMPOSIUM

MIND BODY MENU

NOVEMBER 5–6, 2026 • PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

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Matthew Samel, Ph.D., ’92, ’98 MBA, CHE, FMP

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Luciana Soares, DCN, RDN, LDN, FAND



Welcome to the sixth annual **Food Innovation & Technology (FIT) Symposium** at Johnson & Wales University (JWU). The symposium reflects JWU's long and storied role in the American food landscape, educating and shaping the entrepreneurs and innovators who have elevated all things "food."

Our hope is that you will leave the symposium inspired by the possibilities for elevating food as the linchpin for lifelong health and wellness. We have an exceptional lineup of speakers and panelists who will undoubtedly spark lively and meaningful discussion.

I want to personally thank our event sponsors: RATIONAL, Blade & Tine, Hoshizaki, Zwilling, Chef Works, and our media sponsor, Ocean State Media. Their support speaks to the indispensable role that industry has always played in JWU's approach to experiential education and the value of the JWU brand in food and hospitality sectors.

Thank you all for coming!



Jason R. Evans, Ph.D.
Dean, College of Food Innovation & Technology
Johnson & Wales University

AGENDA

Thursday, November 5

All events will take place in the HAC Amphitheater unless otherwise noted.

8am | **Breakfast**

9am | **Welcome Remarks**

Jason R. Evans, Ph.D.

9:10am | **Keynote**

FEEDING POTENTIAL: LESSONS IN MENU DESIGN, HUMAN BEHAVIOR AND THE ART OF MENTORING

Dan H. Kish

Drawing on more than four decades in the food industry, Chef Dan Kish explores the powerful connections between what we serve, why we crave it and how food shapes human experience. From craft and scale to mentorship and discovery, this thought-provoking keynote examines the intersection of menu design, eating behavior, identity and possibility. Attendees gain fresh insights into how food can nourish not only the body, but also the mind and the communities we serve.

9:40am | **Innovation Lightning Round**

TRIPLE HELIX

Sarah Garland, Ph.D.

9:45am | Fermentation's New Frontier: Tradition, Wellness and the Modern Menu

Sandor Katz, Richard Miscovich '07 MBA, CBB

Ancient preservation techniques have become a defining force in contemporary food culture. From flavor development and culinary creativity to wellness and consumer demand, this panel examines fermentation's growing influence on menus and its enduring connection to health, community and the future of food.

10:35am | Break

10:45am | Teaching Kitchens and Enhanced Nutrition as Transformational Strategies

David Eisenberg, M.D.

Despite unprecedented advances in medicine, poor nutrition remains a driving force behind many of today's health challenges. In this inspiring plenary, David Eisenberg explores the evolution of teaching kitchens, bringing together the worlds of culinary arts and healthcare to improve health outcomes, empower behavior change and redefine nutrition education. Learn why momentum is growing across academic, healthcare and government sectors to better prepare clinicians with practical food and nutrition skills — and how uniquely trained culinary nutrition professionals are helping lead the way.

11:30am | Hospitality Without Hangovers

Sam Diminich

The food and hospitality industry is built around celebration, long hours and high-pressure environments, but for Chef Sam Diminich, embracing wellness became a catalyst for both personal and professional growth. In this candid session, he shares his journey of choosing a healthier path while building a successful career in food. Through stories of challenge, reflection and transformation, he explores how prioritizing physical and mental well-being enhanced his leadership, creativity and connection to hospitality. Attendees gain an inspiring perspective on redefining success in the culinary industry and creating a sustainable career rooted in both passion and wellness.

noon | Innovation Lightning Round

WARING

Jeremy Umansky

12:15pm | Lunch

Culinary Arts Museum

Lunch provided by JWU Catering

1:30pm | Workshops

86 THE STIGMA: PRACTICAL TOOLS FOR A HEALTHIER HOSPITALITY WORKPLACE

Friedman 154

Jasmin Parks-Papadopoulos

The food, beverage and hospitality industry is fast-paced, people-facing and emotionally demanding, and too often, the resulting stress, burnout and mental health challenges go unspoken. This session centers wellness as a core workplace value and creates space to talk openly about what workers are experiencing. Participants explore common wellness challenges and learn simple, accessible tools, including the Workplace Wellness Toolkit, Temperature Take, Scripts for Difficult Conversations and text-based support that facilitate check in, start conversations and build a culture of care one shift at a time.

THE MARTHA'S VINEYARD EFFECT: A CASE STUDY IN MENU INNOVATION AND SAFETY

Friedman 155

Kelly Cleary, M.D.; Lea Hamner, MPH; Carlos Montoya; Michael Rottman; Al Said

Food allergies are reshaping the way restaurants think about menu development, ingredient sourcing and guest experience. As the prevalence of

food allergies continues to rise — including the emergence of alpha-gal syndrome (AGS), a tick-borne allergy to mammalian meat — hospitality professionals have an unprecedented opportunity to lead through innovation while creating safer, more inclusive dining experiences.

This interactive panel explores how one destination known for its culinary excellence, Martha's Vineyard, has become a compelling example of how restaurants can successfully adapt to meet evolving consumer needs. Moderated by Food Allergy Research & Education (FARE), the discussion brings together clinical expertise and real-world culinary perspectives to examine how chefs and restaurateurs have reimagined menus, identified alternative ingredients, strengthened food safety practices, and embraced food allergy inclusion without compromising creativity or quality. Attendees gain practical insights into emerging food allergy trends and the unique challenges presented by AGS.

NAVIGATING DIGITAL WELLNESS IN THE CULINARY SPACE

Friedman 242

Kat Craddock, Stefanie Friedhoff, Colleen Kenyon, Josh Mamaclay '12

Digital media has become inseparable from culinary careers. Today's chefs,

operators and hospitality leaders are not only responsible for menus and guest experience but are expected to function as content creators, personal brands and real-time communicators. With restaurants relying heavily on social media discovery and reputation management, and visual platforms rewarding constant content production and trend participation, hospitality professionals face rising burnout and mental health concerns.

This session positions digital wellness as a professional competency, directly tied to creativity, leadership, workforce sustainability and long-term career growth. Using a journalistic lens, this panel moves beyond screen-time conversations to examine how information habits, algorithmic pressures and online storytelling shape culinary careers. The session connects national media trends with lived experiences from local community members and the next generation of industry talent.

FROM LUXURY TO LIFESTYLE: THE MIND-BODY-MEMBER CONNECTION

Friedman 243

Ryan Kenny ’07; Melissa Rittenhouse, Ph.D., RD, CSSD, FAND, LD; Matthew Samel, Ph.D., ’92, ’98 MBA, CHE, FMP; Chelsea Sanchez ’15; Michael Shannon ’21, CEC

This panel discussion explores how the evolving relationship between mind, body and menu is reshaping the private club industry. As member expectations shift toward holistic wellness, clubs are redefining their value beyond traditional dining and recreation to deliver integrated experiences that nourish both physical health and mental well-being.

Panelists examine how culinary programs are aligning with wellness-driven lifestyles —featuring nutrient-dense menus, functional ingredients and personalized dining options —while also considering the psychological and social dimensions of food within club communities. The conversation highlights emerging trends such as mindful dining, sustainability, and the role of food as a connector of people and purpose. Industry leaders discuss how private clubs can strategically position their food and beverage offerings to support longevity, performance and member engagement. Attendees gain insight into balancing luxury with wellness, tradition with innovation, and how the “menu” can become a central pillar in delivering a cohesive mind-body experience within the modern private club environment.

SCALABILITY WITHOUT SACRIFICING

Friedman 250

Adam Young

Growing a food and beverage brand comes with a constant challenge: How do you scale operations, expand distribution and meet increasing demand without compromising the quality, values and customer experience that made your business successful in the first place? In this session, Adam Young shares lessons learned from navigating growth while maintaining product excellence, operational efficiency and a strong brand identity. Attendees gain practical insights into strategic decision-making, building scalable systems and preserving authenticity as organizations evolve. Whether launching a startup, managing a growing operation or leading an established brand, this session provides actionable strategies for achieving sustainable growth without sacrificing what matters most.

2:50pm | The Great Debate: Who Do We Cook For?

Jody Adams; Chris Coombs; Alexa Gagosz; Derek Wagner ’99, ’19 Hon.

For generations, chefs have pursued excellence through craftsmanship, innovation and the hope of recognition. With the arrival of the MICHELIN Guide in Boston, the conversation around

awards and accolades has never been more relevant. Should chefs prioritize earning stars, rankings and industry recognition, or focus solely on delivering memorable guest experiences? Can culinary ambition and hospitality coexist, or does one inevitably come at the expense of the other? Join this lively debate as industry leaders explore the balance between prestige, purpose and serving the people who matter most: the guest.

3:20pm | A Rising Tide

Jim Boyd, Marisa Ferris, Chelsea Murgo, Jordyn Zacharias

Explore the stories of Rhode Island's multigenerational fishing families and how their roles, traditions and livelihoods have evolved over time. Panelists share perspectives from harvesting, family business operations, seafood sales and mentoring the next generation of fishermen. The discussion examines changing regulations, waterfront access and the challenges of sustaining a local commercial fishing industry. Attendees learn why knowing the source of their seafood matters and how locally harvested species move from Rhode Island waters to markets, restaurants and consumers throughout the state.

3:40pm | Innovation Lightning Round

GOODNOW FARMS CHOCOLATE

Monica Rogan

3:55pm | Break

4pm | Beyond Burnout: Building Healthier Culinary Careers

David Dadekian, Cecelia Lizotte, Kaitlyn Roberts, Jasmine Watson ’16

What does it take to thrive in the restaurant industry for decades, not just years? This discussion examines the challenges that contribute to burnout, including high-pressure environments, long hours and emotional strain. Panelists explore actionable approaches for supporting mental health, building healthy workplace cultures and promoting career longevity across all levels of the profession.

4:45pm | Day One Wrap-Up

Jason R. Evans, Ph.D.

5pm | Cocktail Reception

Music by Matt Byrnes

Participating clubs: Culinaria Latina, Pastry Arts, Cooking Asia, Second Scoop, Charcuterie

AGENDA

Friday, November 6

All events will take place in the Cuisinart Center for Culinary Excellence (CCCE).

8:15am | Breakfast

8:45am | Welcome

Jason R. Evans, Ph.D.

9am | Workshops

WILD CULTURES, NEW FRONTIERS: A HANDS-ON FERMENTATION WORKSHOP

CCCE 416

Sandor Katz, Jeremy Umansky

Join fermentation pioneers for an immersive exploration of traditional techniques and modern culinary applications. Participants create and taste a variety of fermented foods while learning how microbial cultures can transform flavor, texture and preservation. The workshop also features the Waring PlanItPOD Fermentation Chamber, showcasing how controlled fermentation technology can support consistency, creativity and production in both professional and educational kitchens. Leave with practical skills, fresh inspiration and a deeper understanding of fermentation's role in the future of food.

MAKING EVERY CUT COUNT

CCCE 315

Dan Bazzinotti ’06

This hands-on workshop focuses on Tuscan whole pig utilization, agricultural stewardship, artisan sausage production and modern food safety.

MINDFUL LAYERS: THE ART AND INNOVATION OF MODERN LAMINATIONS

CCCE 301

Adam Young

This immersive workshop explores the intersection of precision, creativity and flavor in contemporary laminated pastries. Learn advanced lamination techniques while incorporating sophisticated fillings, textures and finishes that transform classic pastries into memorable culinary experiences. Through a focus on craftsmanship and sensory engagement, discover how the thoughtful balance of technique and innovation can nourish both the creative mind and the guest experience.

CHALLENGE ACCEPTED: RECREATING SIGNATURE DISHES FOR FOOD ALLERGY-FRIENDLY DINING

CCCE 316

Rachel Ciordas; Katrin Heuser; Tiffany Leon, M.S., RD

As food allergies become increasingly common, today’s chefs are expected to create dishes that are both safe and

memorable without sacrificing flavor, texture or presentation. This interactive session challenges culinary professionals to rethink recipes through the lens of food allergy inclusion. The program begins with a 30-minute presentation led by Food Allergy Research & Education (FARE), providing an overview of the growing prevalence of food allergies, common allergens, and key principles of recipe development, ingredient substitution and cross-contact prevention. Participants then put those concepts into practice by reimagining a signature recipe in two versions: the original and a food allergy-friendly adaptation. Through an immersive cooking challenge, participants experience firsthand how thoughtful ingredient substitutions influence flavor, texture, appearance and production while maintaining culinary excellence.

NOURISHING CONNECTIONS: A HANDS-ON JOURNEY THROUGH CAMBODIAN CUISINE

CCCE 415

Neath Pal

Discover the vibrant flavors and culinary traditions of Cambodia in this immersive, hands-on workshop. Participants prepare a traditional yellow kroeung spice paste using fresh aromatics while learning essential techniques for knife skills, herb

preparation and flavor development. Through a focus on ingredient selection, culinary craftsmanship and cultural tradition, attendees explore how balance, aroma and texture come together to create memorable dining experiences. The session offers practical skills, culinary inspiration and a deeper appreciation for one of Southeast Asia's most distinctive food cultures.

MILL TO MENU: MAINE GRAINS APPROACH TO HARVESTING, MILLING AND GRAIN COOKERY

CCCE 402

Jeffery Alexander '97, '19 M.Ed.; Amber Lambke

Step inside the grain-to-table story with Amber Lambke, owner of Maine Grains in Skowhegan, Maine, and Jeffery Alexander, a restaurateur championing regional grains in rural communities. Lambke demystifies grain harvesting and the milling process while Alexander turns knowledge into flavor through a hands-on tasting lab featuring JWU chefs. Participants build bright, seasonal dishes and crisp bakes using pearled Egyptian black barley, spelt farro, einkorn farro and rye berries — plus fermented beer and oat crackers as well as wheat sourdough crisps. Expect practical technique, flavorful pairings and a big-picture conversation about healthy people, places and communities.

PASTA AS PRACTICE: TECHNIQUE, TEXTURE, TIMING

CCCE 407

Adam Pawlak

In this hands-on pasta workshop, Chef Adam Pawlak guides participants through foundational dough making and shaping techniques culminating in the creation of ’Nduja tortellini with roasted tomato butter, stracciatella and fresh basil. Participants mix, knead, rest, roll and shape pasta dough while learning a variety of traditional hand-formed pasta shapes, with special emphasis on tortellini construction, filling balance and sealing technique.

Short demonstrations are paired with coached work time, sensory checkpoints and practical troubleshooting for common dough, filling and rolling challenges. Throughout the session, Pawlak connects the physical craft of pasta making to the symposium’s “Mind, Body, Menu” theme, emphasizing mindful repetition, efficient mise en place, and the relationship between touch, timing and intuition. Participants leave with improved technique, a clarified process, and the confidence to replicate — and teach — handmade pasta successfully in their own kitchens or classrooms.

CULINARY NUTRITION IN ACTION: CULINARY TECHNIQUES THAT TRANSFORM HEALTH

CCCE 406

David Eisenberg, M.D.;
Jon Poyourow, Ph.D., ’03, RD, CSCS, WCEC, WCCE

Join in an engaging exploration of how culinary skills can drive better health outcomes. Through practical demonstrations and evidence-based insights, this session highlights techniques that enhance flavor, improve nutrient quality and support healthier eating patterns. Discover how chefs and health professionals can work together to translate nutrition science into delicious, accessible and impactful food experiences.

CHOCOLATE IS A FOOD, AND WHERE IT COMES FROM MATTERS

CCCE 305

Monica Rogan

While many enjoy chocolate, they don’t realize that it comes from a fruit and all of the steps it goes through to become the sweet treat that ultimately impacts their health, the environment, flavor experience and overall enjoyment.

Through discussion, demonstration and chocolate tasting from bean to bar, Monica Rogan explores her company’s award-winning approach to crafting chocolate as a real food, not simply a

candy. She examines the opportunities and challenges in the cacao and chocolate supply chain, from sourcing and manufacturing, to consumer awareness, public perception, wellness, and our evolving connection to food.

1pm | Lunch

CCCE 417

2:30pm | Conference ends

Keynote Speaker



Dan H. Kish

founder and CEO, Smart Batch

Dan Kish epitomizes the fusion of culinary mastery and innovative thinking, channeling over 40 years of unparalleled expertise into his foremost passion: democratizing access to exceptional food — both in taste and societal impact.

A founding member of Smart Batch™, Kish and his team work closely with emerging brands as they navigate the multiunit growth curve, all the while maintaining their brand standards and staying true to what makes them special. Additionally, Smart Batch™ works with legacy brands who seek to recapture their relevance and thrive in the post-pandemic new world order.

Kish also founded Food-Fixe, a culinary consultancy and business strategy firm. Joining the Revelry Group in 2017 and becoming a partner in 2020, he pioneers groundbreaking concepts for the company's Plantly brand. His primary mission is to redefine perceptions surrounding plant-based foods, not through complex science, but by leveraging fundamental cooking techniques and pristine ingredients.

Before 2017, Kish held multiple leadership positions over his 12 years at Panera Bread, including senior vice president of food, vice president of food, and director of product development. He led the charge

in conceptualizing and innovating the Panera Bread Café menu, elevating offerings spanning sandwiches, salads, soups and beverages. He also played a pivotal role in Panera's Food Action Team, championing clean ingredients, transparency and positive change within the food system.

Prior to Panera, Kish served as faculty and the associate dean for culinary fundamentals at the Culinary Institute of America, his alma mater where he graduated with honors. He also taught at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

His career has taken him across the United States and Chambéry, France, where he immersed himself in diverse global food cultures. He's been a featured culinary expert on "Good Morning America," Food Network, "The View," "Fox & Friends," and in publications such as *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Cooking Light* and *Martha Stewart Living*. He continually blends tradition with trailblazing strategies that transform the foodservice landscape, one visionary concept at a time.

Presenters



Jody Adams

chef/partner, A Street Hospitality

Jody Adams prioritizes working with people and food while building a community. At A Street Hospitality — now an eight-restaurant group — she's growing new, innovative concepts in Mediterranean dining. La Padrona, a fine-dining Italian restaurant that she opened in 2024 at the Raffles Hotel in Boston's Back Bay, earned a MICHELIN Recommended distinction in Boston's inaugural 2025 MICHELIN Guide and a place on the *New York Times*' 2025 list of the best restaurants in America. She is also leading the culinary direction of a forthcoming restaurant at Boston's Four Seasons Hotel.

Adams graduated from Brown University with a degree in anthropology, but a chance meeting with Julia Child and Sara Moulton sent her to work for Lydia Shire at Seasons, where she spent four years cooking on the line, then three years as sous chef for Gordon Hamersley at Hamersley's Bistro. Her next move was to Michela's, as executive chef under Michela Larson. These experiences prepared her to open Rialto, where she spent 22 years before closing the restaurant in 2016. There she won the James Beard Foundation Best Chef: Northeast Award. In 2018 she was inducted into the James Beard Foundation's Who's Who of Food and Beverage in America.

Committed to philanthropy that focuses on health and food insecurity, environmental stewardship, and restaurant and restaurant workers' viability and security, Adams has long associations with the Greater Boston Food Bank, the Women's Lunch Place, and Share Our Strength/No Kid Hungry. She has biked in the Pan-Mass Challenge for over 15 years, and in 2010 donated her winnings on Top Chef Masters to Partners in Health, where she is a trustee. In 2020, she helped found Massachusetts Restaurants United to advocate for restaurants, their workers, and support legislation in response to COVID-19.



Jeffery Alexander '97, '19 M.Ed.

associate instructor, Johnson & Wales University

Jeffery Alexander first began in the baking industry at the age of 13, where he did a short stint at a bakery outside of Philadelphia. It was there he fell in love with his future profession. He worked for some of the best Forbes Five-Star, AAA Five-Diamond hotels, including The Breakers in Palm Beach, Florida, and The Cloister Hotel in Sea Island, Georgia, where he served as head baker and assistant pastry chef.

Alexander has taught pastry classes at the Art Institute of Charleston, the Culinary Institute of Charleston, and Johnson & Wales University's Charleston and Charlotte campuses, before transferring to JWU's Providence Campus.



Dan Bazzinotti ’06

instructor, Johnson & Wales University

Dan Bazzinotti’s culinary career began with renowned chef Lydia Shire at Scampo in the Liberty Hotel in Beacon Hill Boston. He later collaborated with chef/owner Keith Pooler to open Bergamot and Bisq in Cambridge where he earned the Eater 2015 Chef of the Year award for his small plates wine bar menu with over 20 house-made charcuterie items. In 2016 he opened Eataly Boston and assisted in the opening of Eataly Downtown New York. He played a pivotal role in bringing the Italian megastore to Boston, while overseeing the wood-fired grill at the flagship restaurant, Terra, which earned three stars from *Boston Magazine* and recognition as Boston’s Best Up-and-Coming Chef in 2018.

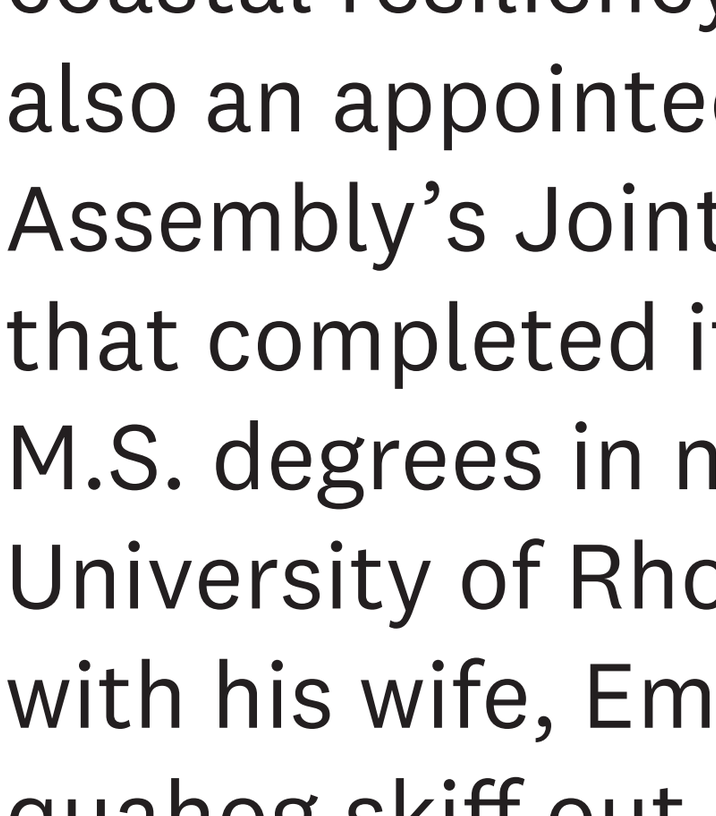
In 2022, Bazzinotti partnered with the New York-based Blue Ribbon Restaurants group and the Bromberg Brothers to open their flagship locations of Blue Ribbon Sushi, Blue Ribbon Brasserie, and Pescador Coastal Grill in the heart of Boston’s Kenmore Square at The Hotel Commonwealth. Returning to his alma mater in 2023, he focuses on the Banquets & Catering class, teaching students the art of butchering, charcuterie and event manage-ment. He is also the advisor of the Johnson & Wales Charcuterie Club.



Jim Boyd

commercial shellfisherman and board member, Rhode Island Shellfisherman's Association

Jim is a full-time commercial shellfisherman on Narragansett Bay with two decades of experience in the shellfish industry. For over 25 years he worked in state environmental regulatory agencies; he retired from the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council in July 2022 where he served as a coastal policy analyst and deputy director working on climate change and sea level rise, coastal resiliency and offshore wind issues. He was also an appointee to the Rhode Island General Assembly's Joint Legislative Quahog Commission that completed its work in 2024. Boyd has B.S. and M.S. degrees in natural resources science from the University of Rhode Island and resides in Rumford with his wife, Emily. He operates his commercial quahog skiff out of Apponaug Cove in Warwick.



Rachel Ciordas

chef educator and Food Allergy Research & Education (FARE) restaurant program consultant

Rachel Ciordas is a Kansas City-based cooking instructor with over 15 years of experience teaching thousands of students in person and online. She is the author of the best-selling newsletter "Next-Level Gluten Free" and chef educator for the Culinary Medicine program at the University of Kansas Medical Center.



Kelly Cleary, M.D.

medical director and vice president of health and education, Food Allergy Research & Education (FARE)

Kelly Cleary, M.D., oversees FARE's national education efforts and maintains a variety of programs and resources for the food allergy community. Previously, she was the medical director of psychopharmacology for PM Behavioral Health. She also co-founded UrgiKids, a pediatric urgent care in Naperville, Illinois. A graduate of Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Cleary completed her pediatrics residency at New York Presbyterian Cornell and finished her pediatric emergency medicine fellowship at NYU-Bellevue. She received her master's degree in public health from Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in May 2026.



Chris Coombs

chief operating officer, co-owner and co-founder, Bosse

Chris Coombs leads all culinary operations at Bosse, New England's most ambitious indoor sports, fitness and lifestyle destination. These operations cover a variety of concepts, including a full-service French café and Viennosierie, an elevated sports bar, and the award-winning Bosse Enoteca, which earned a Wine Spectator Award of Excellence in 2025. That same year, Bosse was named Best of Boston, showcasing the power of Coombs' vision for next-generation hospitality.

Beyond the restaurant world, Coombs is a sought-after private chef, celebrity guest chef and brand ambassador. He offers an exclusive number of private dining experiences each year, unlisted — events that bring restaurant-level execution into private homes for high-profile and discerning clients. His work as a brand ambassador has included collaborations with iconic companies like Mercedes-Benz USA and HP Hood, where his presence, professionalism and culinary authority have helped elevate national campaigns. Whether he's curating a multi-course tasting menu in a private estate or representing global brands on stage, Coombs delivers experiences that are sophisticated, tailored and unforgettable.

Coombs first gained acclaim with the opening of Deuxave at just 26 years old — now one of Boston's most decorated fine-dining institutions, with a Forbes Four-Star rating, a two-glass Wine Spectator Award, and the title of Best French Restaurant in Boston (2025). He also created the bold and stylish Boston Chops steakhouses, known for their indulgent menus and design-forward urban settings.



Kat Craddock

editor-in-chief and CEO, SAVEUR magazine

New York City-based Kat Craddock joined the legacy food magazine in 2015 by way of the test kitchen, and in an unprecedented move, acquired the editor-in-chief and CEO title in 2023. She has nearly 20 years of combined experience across media as an award-winning writer and recipe developer, and hands-on in food — including as a bread baker, pastry chef and cheesemonger in

acclaimed restaurants and specialty shops throughout New York City, Boston and Chicago. She's also the co-author of the forthcoming cookbook "Eat Better, Sleep Better: 75 Recipes and a 28-Day Meal Plan That Unlock the Food-Sleep Connection."



David Dadekian

founder, Eat Drink RI

Named "RI's unofficial Food Laureate®" by Philip Eil of the Providence Phoenix, David Dadekian is a "mastermind of the food news website and event-organizing operation, Eat Drink RI, who seems to know every chef, restaurant, farm stand, and manufactured food product within state lines." Dadekian created Eat Drink RI in 2010 and over the past 16 years, eatdrinkri.com has grown to be one of the top media, marketing and event production companies in the region for all things culinary.

Dadekian serves as board president of Eating with the Ecosystem and board vice president of ecoRI News. He is a founding board member of the Rhode Island Small Business Coalition (RISBC) and is a current member and past chair of the Rhode Island Food Policy Council. When he isn't hosting video interview series such as the RISBC's "Small Business Forum" and Cox YurView's "The Rhode to Recovery," he is working as public relations director, cooking instructor and special events coordinator at Blackbird Farm in Smithfield. Dadekian lives in Coventry with his wife, Brenda, and their two daughters.



Sam Diminich

owner and executive chef,
Your Farms Your Table

Originally from Myrtle Beach, Sam grew up in the restaurants of both his father and his Italian immigrant grandfather. After working his way up the ranks in his family's restaurants, training with local chefs and graduating from the Culinary Institute of America, he trained under chef and owner Georges Perrier at Le Bec Fin in Philadelphia. He then moved back to the South, where he was sous chef at BLT Steak in the Ritz-Carlton Charlotte. He later worked under Executive Chef Raffaele Dall'Erta at The Hampton's Restaurant in Sumter, South Carolina, and most recently was executive chef of Upstream Restaurant in the SouthPark area of Charlotte. In 2020, Diminich appeared on "Beat Bobby Flay" on the Food Network, taking down the legendary chef in an epic lobster risotto battle.

After losing his job during the 2020 pandemic, Diminich founded Your Farms Your Table (YFYT), a farm-to-table meal delivery service that has since evolved into a hospitality group offering catering, curated events, personal chef services and community-supported meals, all designed to celebrate the rich bounty of the Carolinas.

In 2023, he opened Restaurant Constance, a 10-table farm-to-table restaurant in Charlotte's Wesley Heights neighborhood. Named after his daughter, the restaurant is known for its seasonal menus, thoughtful nonalcoholic beverage program and intentional approach to hospitality inspired by his

own journey in recovery. Each dish celebrates the farmers, community partners and team members who help bring his vision to life.

Restaurant Constance was recognized as a MICHELIN Recommended restaurant in the 2025 MICHELIN Guide for the American South. That same year, Diminich also appeared as a contestant on “Chopped” and was named a James Beard Foundation Semifinalist for Best Chef: Southeast.

In 2026, Diminich expanded the YFYT family of brands, opening Grey’s Diner and Community Kitchen. Located in the Plaza Shamrock neighborhood, the concept is a revival of the classic American diner where farm-fresh food, good people and unreasonably good hospitality come together. Open seven days a week for breakfast, lunch and dinner, Grey’s pairs locally sourced food with Michelin-level hospitality in a casual setting.

Beyond the kitchen, Diminich is an advocate for sobriety and mental health in the hospitality industry. He co-leads the Charlotte chapter of Ben’s Friends, a national support group for food and beverage professionals in recovery, and hosts weekly recovery meetings at Restaurant Constance. Since its inception, YFYT’s Community Supported Meals program has served over 183,000 meals to those in recovery.

Passionate about working with local ingredients, Diminich uses sound techniques that balance textures with traditional and contemporary flavors. His goal is to prepare food that celebrates and centers the meal experience within the story of our lives with friends and family.



David Eisenberg, M.D.

director of culinary nutrition and adjunct associate professor, Department of Nutrition, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

As the son and grandson of professional bakers, David Eisenberg, M.D., aspires to synergize the culinary and medical communities to enhance human and planetary health. A graduate of Harvard College and Harvard Medical School, he was selected in 1979 as the first exchange medical student from the U.S. to the People's Republic of China. From 2000 to 2010, he served as the Bernard Osher Distinguished Associate Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School, founding director of the Osher Research Center, and the founding chief of the Division for Research and Education in Complementary and Integrative Medical Therapies at Harvard Medical School. He simultaneously served as the director of the Program in Integrative Medicine at the Brigham & Women's Hospital. He has directed the annual Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health-Culinary Institute of America conference Healthy Kitchens, Healthy Lives since 2006.

In 2015 Eisenberg founded the Teaching Kitchen Collaborative, a network of 86 organizations with teaching kitchens, intended to evaluate best practices relating to nutrition, culinary and lifestyle education. He served as the founding executive director of the Teaching Kitchen Collaborative and is now its senior advisor. He has been an advisor to the US National Institutes of Health, the National Board of Medical Examiners, and the US Department of Health and Human Services.



Marisa Ferris

commercial fisherman, Little Rhody

Marisa Ferris has worked alongside her husband, Ryan, on their fishing vessel *Little Rhody* for the last 15 years. Prior to life on the water, she was an engineer working part time on a friend's boat; after realizing office work was not the career she wanted anymore, she shifted to commercial fishing full time. Ferris and her husband harvest fish traps for black sea bass, scup, tautog, flounder and more. They practice a method known as ikejime, a more humane way to dispatch a fish. They also harvest whelks and quahogs, and direct sale all their catch to consumers and local restaurants. Ferris says her favorite part of the work is seeing a reward at the end of the day for her efforts and not knowing what the day holds.



Stefanie Friedhoff

professor of the practice and director of the Information Futures Lab, Brown University School of Public Health

Stefanie Friedhoff's 35-year career spans international media, academia and government, from covering the fall of the Berlin Wall to serving as a White House senior policy advisor on information integrity during the COVID-19 pandemic. At Brown, she dedicates her work to studying information ecosystems and pioneering resilient models of communication that restore civic relationships and support diverse communities in real time.



Alexa Gagosz

business reporter, The Boston Globe

Alexa Gagosz covers retail, the business of restaurants and the consumer economy. Before joining the business desk in May 2026, she worked for the Globe's Rhode Island bureau, covering business, higher education, homelessness and housing, the healthcare industry and restaurants. She writes "The Food Club," an award-winning weekly newsletter on the restaurant industry, and has served on the James Beard Restaurant and Chef Awards subcommittee since 2024. A former bartender, she earned her bachelor's degree in journalism from Suffolk University and her master's degree in media innovation from Northeastern University.



Sarah Garland, Ph.D.

founder and executive director, Triple Helix Institute for Agriculture, Climate and Society

Sarah Garland founded Triple Helix, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to building cross-sector awareness and engagement around agricultural technology for climate action. She received a Ph.D. in plant sciences from the University of Cambridge, where she focused on CRISPR gene editing in plants, and completed a postdoctoral fellowship at Columbia University's Earth Institute, where she explored the role of crop biotechnology in developing climate-resilient and nutritious food systems. Garland's thought leadership focuses on the intersection of technology and agriculture, and her

writing has been featured in publications such as Scientific American, Slate and The New Republic. She first became fascinated with plant genetics while completing a B.S. degree in biology at Duke University.



Lea Hamner, MPH

public health epidemiologist, Barnstable County Department of Health and Environment

Lea Hamner specializes in tick-borne diseases and alpha-gal syndrome (AGS), a tick-associated allergy to mammal products. Her work sits at the intersection of public health, healthcare, research and community education, with a particular focus on understanding the rapidly changing impact of lone star ticks and AGS on island communities like Martha's Vineyard. She leads community education and support efforts for people living with AGS and collaborates with clinicians and researchers to improve surveillance, awareness and understanding of this emerging condition. Hamner holds a bachelor's degree from Yale College and a master's degree in public health from the Yale School of Public Health.

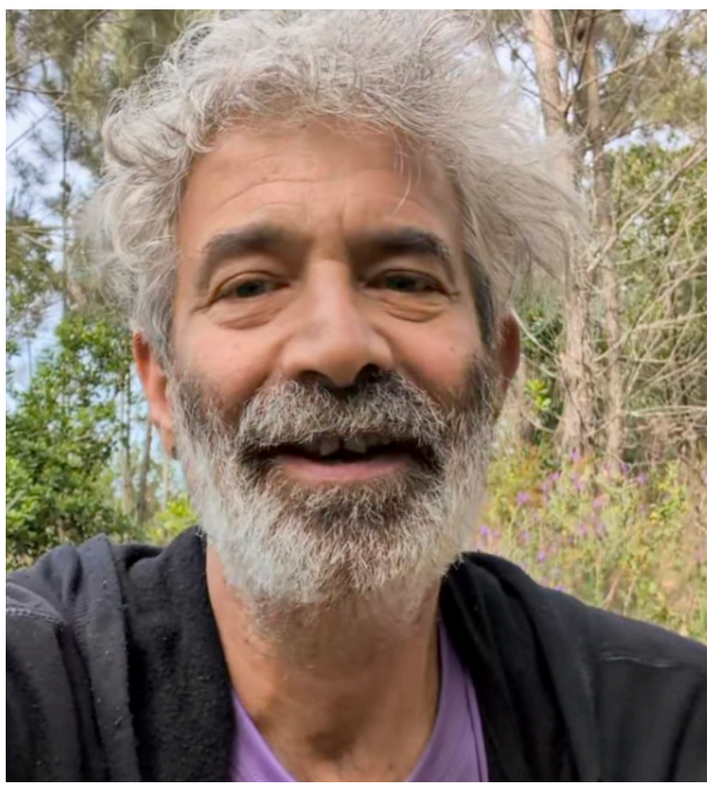


Katrin Heuser

sommelier/general manager, Affäre Restaurant

Born in Germany, Katrin Hauser studied hotel and restaurant management in Vancouver, British Columbia, and worked for multiple fine dining establishments, where she soon discovered her passion for wines. She completed her sommelier diploma in Calgary, Alberta, through the International Sommelier Guild and worked in

the field for many years before deciding to open her own restaurant with her husband, Martin, in Kansas City, Missouri.



Sandor Katz

fermentation revivalist and author

A self-taught experimentalist who lives in rural Tennessee, Sandor Katz is the author of six books: “Wild Fermentation,” “The Revolution Will Not Be Microwaved,” “The Art of Fermentation,” “Fermentation as Metaphor,” “Fermentation Journeys,” and his forthcoming “Fermentation: A Natural History.” “The Art of Fermentation”, which received a James Beard award and has been widely translated, was selected by the *New York Times* as one of “the 25 most influential cookbooks from the last 100 years.” Katz’s books, along with the hundreds of fermentation workshops he has taught around the world, have helped to catalyze a broad revival of the fermentation arts.



Ryan Kenny ’07

general manager and chief operating officer, Philadelphia Country Club

With more than 25 years of experience in private club and hospitality management, Ryan Kenny is a seasoned hospitality executive and financially skilled business leader recognized for his hands-on leadership style, operational expertise and his commitment to service excellence, team development and the creation of exceptional member experiences.

A graduate of Johnson & Wales University, Kenny earned his degree in hospitality management in 2007. During his time at Johnson & Wales, he served as president of the Club Management Association of America (CMAA) Student Chapter in both 2005 and 2006 and was selected as a school ambassador for the National Restaurant Association in 2006. He remains actively involved with Johnson & Wales as a supporter of the CMAA Student Chapter and has served as a panelist and mentor for students pursuing careers in hospitality and club management.

Kenny's professional strengths include strategic planning, construction and capital project management, financial analysis, and food and beverage operations. Known as a culture builder and mentor, he is committed to developing accountable, engaged teams dedicated to delivering thoughtful, memorable and first-rate service.

Established in 1890 and located in Gladwyne, Pennsylvania, Philadelphia Country Club is one of the nation's most historic and respected private clubs. The club has hosted prestigious championships, including the 1939 U.S. Open, and will proudly co-host the 2026 United States Amateur Championship, continuing its distinguished legacy in golf.

Under Kenny's leadership, Philadelphia Country Club continues to honor its traditions while evolving to meet the expectations of modern members and families through exceptional service, professionalism and a sense of community.



Colleen Kenyon

chief community and education officer, Ocean State Media

Colleen Kenyon spearheads the strategic development of community-centered educational production and engagement. Drawing on a bachelor's degree in psychology and elementary education from Roger Williams University and a graduate certificate in digital literacy from the University of Rhode Island, she is a dedicated advocate for using media as a transformative tool for empowerment and equity.

With over 20 years of experience across diverse learning environments, Kenyon leads a dedicated team in fostering meaningful partnerships that strengthen the educational and social fabric of the community. Her work is centered on providing learners of all ages with the resources and digital skills they need to thrive as informed, engaged global citizens.



Amber Lambke

co-founder and CEO, Maine Grains Inc.

Amber Lambke spurred the revival of grain production in Maine when, in 2009, she and artisan brick oven baker, Michael Scholz, purchased Skowhegan's old county jail and transformed it into a gristmill for cleaning and processing grains for bakers, brewers and chefs across the Northeast. The downtown building has become an entrepreneurial hub for an adjacent café and dry goods shop, a community radio station, an independently owned yarn shop, a creamery for

making cheese and a community gathering space. The site hosts the 25-year-old Skowhegan Farmers Market and is a destination for locals and visitors alike.

Beginning operations in 2012, the mill is now the largest in Maine to use the traditional stone milling process. Working with over 40 local farmers, Maine Grains processes all-natural and certified organic whole grains and oats on an Austrian stone mill and sells them under the Maine Grains label to retail locations throughout the Northeast.

Lambke was the founding director of the Maine Grain Alliance, a nonprofit formed to preserve regional grain traditions from earth to table. She co-founded the Kneading Conference, a Maine Grain Alliance event that attracts attendees from across the world and has spawned other grain and artisan bread celebrations throughout the country. She is the managing owner of the Miller's Table and The Biergarten, which feature menus showcasing local products and grains. She currently serves on the boards of Maine Community Foundation, the Skowhegan Selectboard, and the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture.



Tiffany Leon, M.S., RD

director of health and education, Food Allergy Research & Education (FARE)

Tiffany Leon supports the development of educational materials and training programs for key target audiences, including registered dietitians, healthcare professionals, commercial foodservice operators and those with food allergies. She has been a registered dietitian for

more than 10 years and has earned degrees from James Madison University and Columbia University.



Cecelia Lizotte

chef, founder and owner, Suya Joint

Growing up in Nigeria, Cecelia Lizotte used to help her grandmother in the kitchen of her small village restaurant. Watching people gather each day for her grandmother's food, sharing laughter, conversation and community, planted the seed for a childhood dream. After immigrating to the United States, Lizotte turned that dream into Suya Joint — a tribute to her grandmother and a celebration of Nigerian food, culture and hospitality that nourishes both body and soul.

Her journey as an entrepreneur and immigrant woman has been shaped by resilience, adaptability, and a commitment to creating opportunities for others. What began as a way to share the food she grew up with has evolved into a platform for cultural storytelling, connection and community.

Today, Suya Joint has grown to include restaurants in Boston and Providence, a traveling food truck, catering, cultural and community experiences, and the Suya Joint Supper Club. Lizotte has received recognition from local and national media, including *The New York Times*, *The Boston Globe*, WBUR and GBH, along with recognition from *Rhode Island Monthly* and Best of Boston. She was named a James Beard Award semifinalist for Best Chef: Northeast in 2024 and participates in the James Beard Foundation's Women's Entrepreneurial Leadership program.

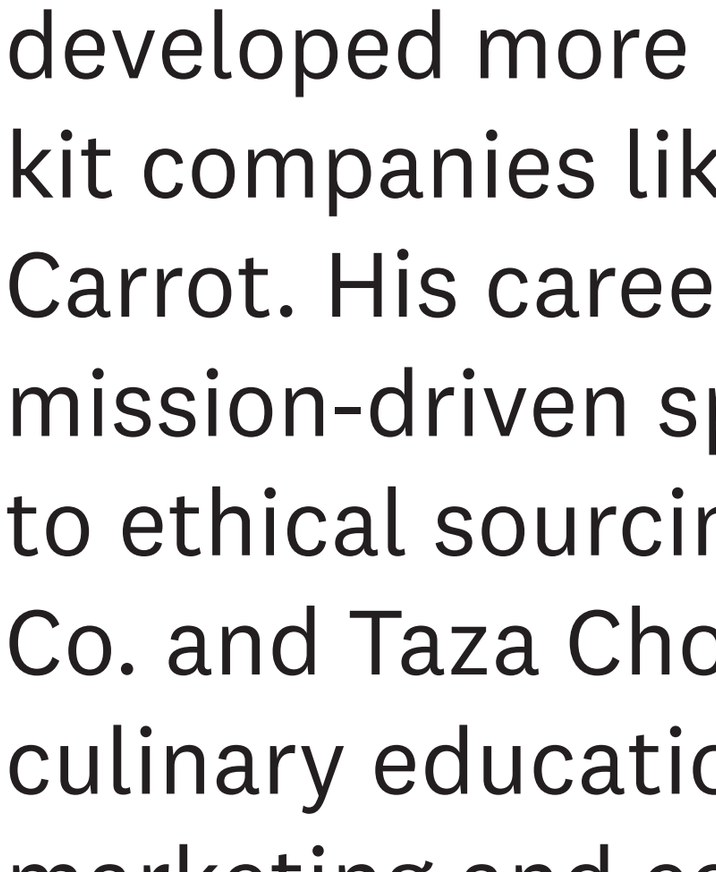


Josh Mamaclay ’12

instructor, Johnson & Wales University

Josh Mamaclay brings the perspective of a culinary educator, recipe developer, food media professional and marketing leader to the classroom. A JWU alumnus, he has built a multidisciplinary career exploring not only how great food is made, but how it is taught, developed, photographed, marketed and shared with audiences.

As a cast member of the Emmy Award-winning PBS series “Christopher Kimball’s Milk Street Television,” Mamaclay has appeared in more than 50 culinary segments across seven seasons and taught over 100 classes at their studio kitchen in Boston. He has developed more than 250 recipes for meal delivery kit companies like Tom Brady’s TB12 and Purple Carrot. His career also includes leadership roles at mission-driven specialty food companies committed to ethical sourcing and sustainability like Curio Spice Co. and Taza Chocolate, where his work has spanned culinary education, recipe development, food media, marketing and consumer engagement.



Richard Miscovich ’07 MBA, CBB

associate professor, Johnson & Wales University

Richard Miscovich’s expertise in bread-baking covers the entire process, from the source of ingredients to the methods and techniques used in the many types of ovens that achieve the final

flavorful, nutritious finished product. He is the author of “From the Wood-Fired Oven” (Chelsea Green, 2013). He has also served two terms on the board of the Bread Bakers Guild of America.



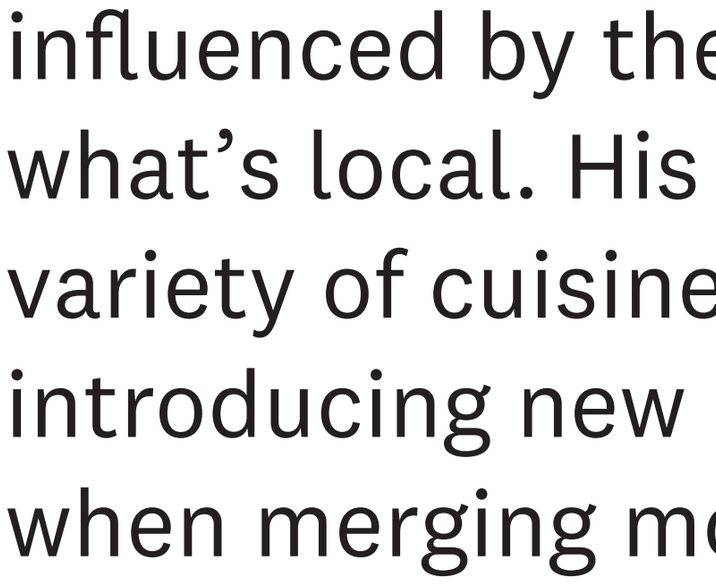
Carlos Montoya

co-owner, founder and executive chef, Maker Café

Carlos Montoya is a Martha’s Vineyard and Boston-based private chef/caterer that has been cooking for more than 20 years. Born in Colombia and raised in Queens, New York, he has held numerous roles throughout his career in New York, Boston and Martha’s Vineyard.

Since moving to Martha’s Vineyard in 2008, Montoya has worked at the Sweet Life, Detente, Edgartown Yacht Club and Garde East. He has had the pleasure of cooking for Presidents Barack Obama and Bill Clinton.

Montoya’s style of “inspirational cooking” is influenced by the seasons, by what’s available and what’s local. His vast experience cooking a wide variety of cuisines allows him to be nimble when introducing new ingredients to familiar dishes or when merging modern gastronomy with classical French techniques.



Chelsea Murgo

commercial fisherwoman

Chelsea Murgo graduated from The George Washington University and returned to Rhode Island to pursue a career in nonprofits. Before long she met her future

husband and entered the world of commercial fishing. What started as a few fun days playing deck-hand on the boat turned into a self-employed commercial fisherman's full-time "land support" — a term the pair coined to include all the activities that must occur on land for a fisherman to thrive on the water — including, but not limited to, the food and supplies for the boat, bookkeeping and accounting responsibilities, bait acquisition, and so much laundry. In recent years, Murgo has added the title of wife and mother to her repertoire. As a little girl, she never would have imagined a life on the water, but her favorite pastime has become quahogging with her family.



Neath Pal

instructor, Johnson & Wales University

Neath Pal came to the United States from Cambodia in 1975. He received the certificate of Le Grand Diplôme d'Etudes Culinaires from France's prestigious LaVarenne cooking school.

After working in several Parisian restaurants, he returned home to Rhode Island, where he honed his skills at Al Forno. From there he helped establish L'Epicureo, which quickly gained national attention, as well as Grappa, another celebrated bistro.

In 1998 Pal opened Neath's New American Bistro. Bryan Miller, former food critic of the *New York Times*, praised the restaurant as a "giant leap eastward" for the Providence food scene. Blending French and Asian influences, the eclectic menu highlighted the flavors of Pal's native Cambodia, such as coconut milk, lemongrass, kaffir lime and Thai basil.

He also received the 2013 Dean's Award for Professional Achievement. He specializes in international and Asian cuisines.

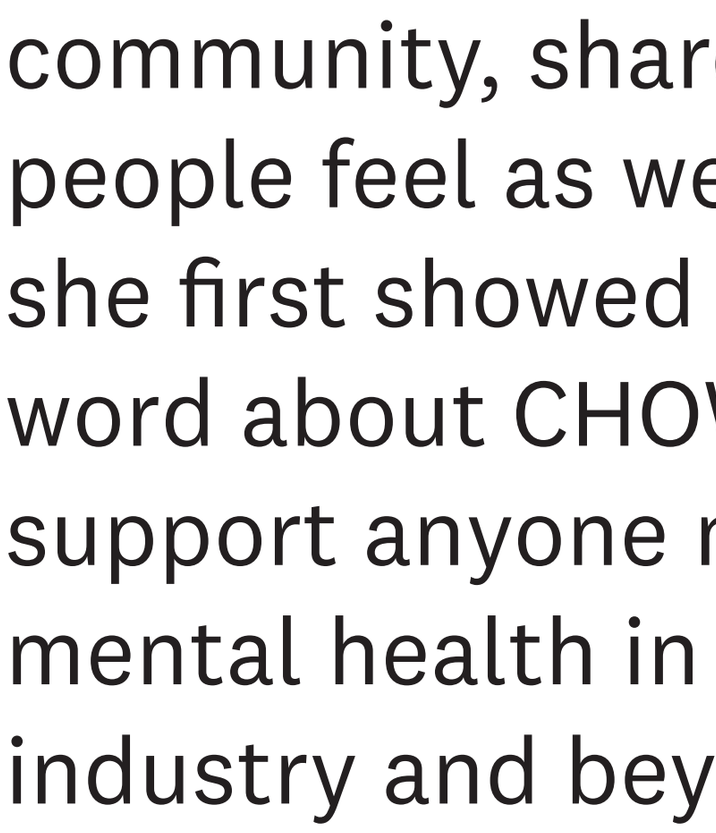


Jasmin Parks-Papadopoulos

chief growth officer, Culinary Hospitality Outreach and Wellness (CHOW)

Third-generation chef Jasmin Parks-Papadopoulos never realized how deeply her high-functioning anxiety was woven into her career and identity. Like so many others, she hit a turning point during the Great Resignation when she discovered CHOW in 2020.

At CHOW, Parks-Papadopoulos found support, clarity and a way out of an industry within which she had been hiding. After gaining the space to breathe, reflect and reconnect with who she was, she decided to help create that same space for others. As part of the CHOW team, Parks-Papadopoulos builds community, shares real stories and ensures that people feel as welcomed and seen as she did when she first showed up. Her mission is to spread the word about CHOW's work, grow its reach, and support anyone navigating the ups and downs of mental health in the food/beverage/hospitality industry and beyond.



Adam Pawlak

owner, Egg & Flour

Adam Pawlak was born and raised in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Growing up in an Italian family jumpstarted his love of food and cooking from a

very young age. Working in restaurants all over the city, he learned a variety of culinary styles — from classic American and Italian to international and world cuisine — and honed his specialty: high-end Italian cuisine with several French influences. He expanded his résumé and traveled often, learning new techniques across the US.

Pawlak credits his time holding every position in the restaurant industry as inevitably leading him to own his popular fast-casual pasta bar, Egg & Flour, and its multiple locations. He conducts high-end private classes as well as in-home and off-site corporate events for hire.



Jon Poyourow, Ph.D., ’03, RD, CSCS, WCEC, WCCE

professor, Johnson & Wales University

Jon Poyourow leads the teaching kitchen at JWU, where his work focuses on the intersection of culinary arts, nutrition science, exercise science and human performance. A 2003 graduate of JWU’s Culinary Nutrition program, he combines more than two decades of experience as a chef, registered dietitian, educator and performance nutrition professional.

Prior to his academic career, Poyourow served as an active-duty US Army dietitian, including assignments supporting the 101st Airborne Division and Special Operations units. His professional work has included clinical nutrition, foodservice leadership, sports performance nutrition, culinary medicine and nutrition education. Today, he applies this interdisciplinary expertise to educating future

culinary and nutrition professionals, advancing teaching kitchen and culinary medicine initiatives, and consulting in sports performance nutrition.



Melissa Rittenhouse, Ph.D., RD, CSSD, FAND, LD

nutrition and exercise scientist, Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine; associate professor, Uniformed Services University

Melissa Rittenhouse, Ph.D., specializes in culinary nutrition and human performance. As a Certified Specialist in Sports Dietetics (CSSD), her work emphasizes the practical application of nutrition science through culinary medicine, diet quality improvement and performance-focused fueling strategies.

Rittenhouse plays an active role in nutrition education by teaching a Food is Medicine course and leading a hands-on culinary lab for medical students that integrates evidence-based nutrition with real-world food preparation skills. She also provides individualized nutrition consultations at Columbia Country Club in Bethesda, Maryland, where she translates practical performance nutrition principles into actionable strategies.

Her research focuses on the military nutrition environment, diet quality, and the role of culinary and nutrient interventions in optimizing health and performance. She earned her Ph.D. degree from Kent State University, her M.S. degree from Georgia State University and her B.S. degree in dietetics from the University of Dayton.

Rittenhouse is a member of several professional organizations, including the American Sports and Performance Dietitians Association (ASPDA) and the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and its Sports and Human Performance Nutrition (SHPN) subgroup. She has authored numerous peer-reviewed publications as well as books, book chapters, technical reports and white papers.



Kaitlyn Roberts

founder, Easy Entertaining Inc.

In 2006 Kaitlyn Roberts founded Easy Entertaining Inc. on Providence's West Side as a personal chef and in-home catering business. In her 20 years on the New England culinary scene, she has grown the company into culinary force — catering everything from in-home dinner parties to multimillion-dollar fundraisers, and employing over 70 hard-working and creative Rhode Islander's. Roberts was awarded the Rhode Island Small Business Person of the Year in 2025. Easy Entertaining has won over 10 couples choice awards for wedding excellence recognition along with a prestigious "Best of RI award" from Rhode Island Monthly for "Private Party Pros."

Roberts attended Wofford College in South Carolina and completed her culinary training at Apicius Culinary Institute in Florence, Italy. This training influenced her career trajectory. Following her passion for wine studies that began under Diletta Frescobaldi in Italy, she received an advanced degree from London's Wine & Spirits Education Trust Program in 2010 and currently leads culinary and

wine tours throughout Italy. She has also had the pleasure of assisting Apicius chefs in preparing a variety of meals for the James Beard House in New York City.

Always seeking to further her education, Roberts also completed a wellness and sustainability stage with Executive Chef Deb Morgan Bennett of Kripalu in the Berkshires. She serves on the board of the Rhode Island Small Business Council and is an advocate for business of all sizes within the state. She resides with her husband and twin six-year-olds in Rhode Island, where she enjoys hiking, tennis and snacking her way throughout the state.



Monica Rogan

CEO, co-founder and chocolate maker, Goodnow Farms Chocolate

Monica Rogan's passion for creating exceptional bean-to-bar, single-origin chocolate has made her a leader in the craft chocolate industry. She has spent years developing strong, direct relationships with cacao farmers and producers throughout Latin America, ensuring mutually beneficial relationships and access to consistently high-quality beans. Transparency, traceability and an emphasis on fine flavor and real ingredients define her approach to chocolate as food — not candy.

Using best practices and pushing boundaries, she crafts flavor-forward chocolate sold in gourmet stores around the world. Her chocolate has received eight consecutive Good Food Awards, hundreds of international fine flavor awards and a spot on Food & Wine's list of "The Best Chocolate in America."

Rogan is a manufacturing engineer with a Bachelor of Science degree from James Madison University and an MBA degree from Pepperdine University. Before finding her way to chocolate, she worked in construction and real estate development. When she's not crafting new bars, she enjoys edible landscaping with her rescue dog, Lucky, traveling, searching for vintage textiles and furniture, and exploring music and art with her children and husband.



Michael Rottman

private chef, ArtFoodLifeMV

Based on Martha's Vineyard since 2007, Michael Rottman is a private chef and artist who brings a farm-to-table philosophy to his work, drawing inspiration from the land (local farmers), the ocean (local fishermen) and the people he cooks for. His approach to food is deeply personal — centered on nourishment, simplicity and bringing people together around the table while embracing French and Italian techniques.



Al Said

executive chef, The Covington

Growing up in West Hartford, Connecticut, as the son of an American mother and Indonesian father, Al Said developed a love of eating and cooking shaped by many family potlucks. His cooking career began while at the University of Pittsburgh working on the line at Fuel and Fuddle for five years until he moved to Boston in 2012. Over the next five years he worked as a line cook in the Arlington/Cambridge area, first at Tryst Restaurant, then Alden and Harlow in Harvard Square.

After moving to Martha's Vineyard in the summer 2016, Said worked as the grill cook at The Port Hunter. He became the opening baker at Pagu in Cambridge the following winter, but returned to Martha's Vineyard in the summer of 2018 to become the head baker for The Port Hunter and its sister restaurant, The Covington, in Edgartown. In 2020, he took over as the executive chef of The Covington, a role that he has held for the past seven seasons. The ability to work closely with local farmers, spanning from produce and pigs to the incredible fishing and aquaculture scene, has been a highlight of his time cooking on the island. The agricultural community connections have helped to shape an environment in which he is proud and grateful to cook. Said enjoys his part in running a successful restaurant where the vibes are always positive and everyone treats each other with kindness and respect.



Matthew Samel, Ph.D., '92, '98 MBA, CHE, FMP

professor, Johnson & Wales University

Matthew Samel holds a Ph.D. degree in organization and management with a specialization in human resources. His focus of study is in organizational culture and person-organization fit (P-O fit). He teaches in the College of Hospitality & Business and has operational, training and human resources work experience in a variety of industry segments, including hotels, independently and corporately owned restaurant organizations and private clubs.

Samel is an associate member of the Club Management Association of America (CMAA), the

Academy of Management and the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). He is a Certified Food Manager Professional (FMP – NRA), Certified Hospitality Educator (CHE – AHLEI) and a Certified Senior Professional in Human Resources® (SPHR®).

In addition to teaching, he is the faculty advisor to the student CMAA chapter, where he assists students in obtaining scholarships, securing employment and internships, and attending the CMAA Student Education and World Conference on Club Management. He has lectured internationally at the Escola Superior de Hotelaria e Tourismo in Estoril, Portugal.



Chelsea Sanchez ’15

chef de cuisine, Sea Pines Country Club

Raised in Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, Chelsea Sanchez has been a Lowcountry local for most of her life. After moving to Florida to attend culinary school at Johnson & Wales University in North Miami, she took part in a two-year ice carving apprenticeship and completed her degree with an externship through Walt Disney World’s Culinary College Program. She then began training under Chef Kathleen Blake, a four-time James Beard Foundation “Best Chef South” semi-finalist, at her farm-to-table restaurant, The Rusty Spoon, in downtown Orlando.

Moving back home in 2017, Sanchez worked under Chef Brian Coseo at Sea Pines Country Club (SPCC) in a private residential gated community on the island’s southern coast. Starting as a grill cook, she was later promoted to chef de cuisine after successfully opening the newly reconstructed pool-side Club

Course Café. She then became executive sous chef under Chef Brandon Carter at FARM Bluffton, where she was able to share her love of locally sourced food that combines Southern flavors with international influences.

A few years later, she was invited back to SPCC to help re-structure the Blue Heron Pub & Grille, the club's a la carte restaurant, after going through a multi-million-dollar kitchen renovation. She created seasonal menus that rotate regularly and established connections with locally sourced purveyors to bring a fresh and dietary-restriction-friendly food experience.

In her downtime, Sanchez enjoys reading and spending time outdoors walking around the Pickney Island nature preserve or kayaking. With her natural disposition for cooking nurtured from a very young age, she looks forward to evolving within the industry, sharing her experience and mentoring others every step of the way.



Michael Shannon '21, CEC

executive chef, Philadelphia Country Club

Michael Shannon is a highly accomplished executive chef with more than 15 years of experience in the culinary industry. His culinary approach combines classical technique with modern presentation, allowing ingredients to remain recognizable and food to be showcased in its natural form. Known for his leadership, technical expertise and passion for team development, Shannon has built a reputation for creating efficient, innovative and high-performing culinary programs. He is equally

dedicated to cultivating a kitchen culture rooted in mentorship, creativity, accountability and continuous learning.

Originally from Chicago, Illinois, Shannon began cooking at a young age, leading him to pursue formal culinary training and an award-winning career in private club dining. After earning his associate degree in culinary arts from Joliet Junior College, he quickly distinguished himself by winning the ACF Student Team National Championship in 2011. This achievement opened doors to new opportunities and prompted his move to Boston, where he refined his skills under Certified Master Chef Joseph Leonardi. Shannon steadily advanced through the ranks before becoming executive chef of the Somerset Club at the age of 26. Throughout his career, he has been recognized for his commitment to culinary excellence, earning honors that include ACF Chef of the Year in 2021 and recognition as one of Club + Resort Chef's "40 Under 40" in 2024.

While leading the culinary program at the Somerset Club, he continued his education and earned a bachelor's degree in culinary arts and restaurant management from Johnson & Wales University, further strengthening his expertise in both culinary execution and operational leadership.

In 2025, Shannon relocated to the Philadelphia area to become executive chef of Philadelphia Country Club, one of the region's premier private clubs. In this role, he oversees a $5.5 million food-and-beverage operation encompassing three restaurants, two clubhouses, banquet facilities and large-scale member events. He also played an integral role in

designing and opening two new restaurant concepts within the club's newly constructed clubhouse — overseeing kitchen planning, menu development, staffing and operational implementation.

Shannon has served as a board member of the ACF Epicurean Club of Boston and as a representative on the ACF National Certification Committee. He has also led the Jeunes Chefs mentorship program for the Chaîne des Rôtisseurs Boston Bailliage and helped train chefs preparing to represent the United States in international culinary competition. As he continues to advance the culinary program at Philadelphia Country Club, Shannon remains committed to elevating the standards of private club dining and inspiring the next generation of chefs.



Jeremy Umansky

chef, mycologist, author and gastronomic scientist, Larder Delicatessen & Bakery

Jeremy Umansky and his Cleveland-based Larder are five-time James Beard Foundation nominees. He has been featured in numerous publications and programs like *Bon Appetit*, *Saveur*, and NPR's "Science Friday." *Food & Wine* magazine proclaimed him "The Deli[catessen] Prophet" for his mastery of Jewish delicatessen cuisine, while Certified Angus Beef named him "Innovator of the Year" for his use of the culinary mold Koji in his cuisine.

Umansky partnered with chef and scientist Rich Shih to author the seminal gastronomic book "Koji Alchemy," a James Beard Foundation media finalist that has been translated into seven languages and

used in culinary schools and fine dining kitchens around the globe.

His recent work includes helping to design closed loop, off-world food systems for NASA's Innovative Advanced Concepts (NIAC) program and helping to develop The POD, a kitchen-ready fermentation chamber, manufactured by PlanitPod and Waring, a Conair subsidiary.



Derek Wagner '99, '19 Hon.

chef and owner, Nicks on Broadway

In 2002, at the age of 24, Derek Wagner opened Nicks on Broadway, a restaurant which Fodor's International Travel Guide named "One of the World's Best Restaurants." Community connection is Wagner's paramount philosophy. He has developed and fostered strong relationships with local growers, producers, farmers and fishermen. Responsible sourcing, community building, reducing food waste, education, craftsmanship and sustainability are all tenets of his work. His passion for food, community, collaboration with chefs nationwide, and a strong desire for his work to have a positive and meaningful impact on our food system led him to work with organizations like Chefs Collaborative, James Beard Foundation, CSA, EDF, The Good Meat Project, Eating with the Eco System, to name a few.

Wagner is a five-time James Beard nominee: two-time Rising Star nominee and three-time Best Chef Northeast nominee. He has been featured on TV's Food Network and BBC America and written about in *Food & Wine*, *Esquire Magazine*, *GQ Magazine*,

Playboy, *Maxim*, *Travel & Leisure*, *Clean Eating Magazine*, *The New York Times* and *The New York Times* cookbook, *The Boston Globe*, and *The London Independent*. He has also contributed to several publications including “Harvest to Heat,” The James Beard Foundation book “Waste Not,” The Chefs Collaborative Cookbook, and VICE news.



Jasmine Watson ’16

former chef de cuisine, Audette

Originally from Athens, New York, Jasmine Watson moved to Rhode Island to attend Johnson & Wales University, graduating in 2016 from the culinary arts program with a concentration in wellness and sustainability. She soon joined Newport Vineyards as garde manger and worked her way up to executive sous chef. After a brief stint at Common Thread in Savannah, Georgia, she returned to Rhode island to work at TSK, Cara at the Chanler and Audette in Newport. Earlier this year she was named a James Beard Award semifinalist for Best Emerging Chef.



Adam Young

founder and owner, A.T.Y. Hospitality

Adam Young founded and owns A.T.Y. Hospitality, which includes Sift Bake Shop, Mix Restaurant & Rooftop, Young Buns Doughnuts and A.T.Y. Bar & Bonbons. A graduate of the New England Culinary Institute, he served as executive pastry chef on the opening team at Ocean House, a Forbes Five-Star, AAA Five-Diamond and Relais & Châteaux property. In 2018, he was crowned Food Network’s Best Baker in America.

Since opening Sift Bake Shop in 2016, Young has expanded the award-winning bakery to multiple locations across Connecticut and Rhode Island. He is the author of the “Sift” cookbook and is a frequent participant in food and wine festivals and culinary events throughout the country.



Jordyn Zacharias

fisheries marketing specialist, Rhode Island Seafood

Originally from San Diego, Jordyn Zacharias is no stranger to the water and fresh, locally caught seafood. Coming from a third-generation fishing family, she grew up working as a deckhand for her father and coordinating the direct sales of their catch to the community. Graduating from San Diego State University with a bachelor’s degree in communications and a minor in sustainability, she spent several years as a seafood liaison for Slow Fish working on community outreach and education on San Diego’s fisheries. She has attended conferences and meetings both nationally and internationally to speak about the importance and success of commercial fishing and sustainable seafood sources.

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