

USC Hospitality and the Chefs de Cuisine Association of CA show the benefits of partnership by hosting ChefNet 2016 at USC

On Monday the 6th of June 2016, the NACUFS Pacific Region ChefNet conference kicked-off at the USC Midtown Radisson located on the University of Southern California campus. 50 enthusiastic chefs from the Pacific region registered to be part of this event. The aim of the ChefNet 2016 was low cost education, networking and synergy with the chefs of USC and the CCAC.

There was over a dozen industry leading professionals on hand to share new ideas, innovation and provided certification and competition mentorship to the western regions' chefs. Special thanks for educational support goes to Chef Stafford DeCambra CEC, CCE, CCA, AAC, Chef Mark Spelman CEC, CCA, AAC and Chef Brandon Parry CEC, ACC. These esteemed chefs and many other presenters volunteered their time, resulting in a low registration cost of \$125. USC Hospitality Director and Hotel General Manager Dirk DeJong was also gracious to offer participants a \$99 room rate. The program offered participants 24 CEH for attending all seminars.

During registration participants received a gift bag from Sysco, EcoLab and USFoods. Chefs also received several cookbooks, a 10-inch Wusthof chef's knife and an embroidered chef coat from NEWCHEF Fashion.

USC's Executive Chef Eric D. Ernest CEC, CCA kicked off the conference with a short welcome and review of the educational goals for the upcoming programming. The first presenter was Chef Ed Glebus CEC with a primer on ACF Certification. Chef Ed highlighted the importance of certification, mentorship and development. He covered the ACF 2 step certification process, written examination and practical testing.

Next, Cal dining Executive Director Shawn LePean did a presentation on Menus of Change and the Menus of Change University Research Collaborative. Menus of Change is a set of 24 principles created in collaboration with the CIA and the T.H. Chang Harvard School of Public Health, and is best described as the business of healthy, sustainable and delicious food choices. Shawn shared how UC Berkeley is implementing these principles on campus to students, who will soon become adult decision makers.

That evening there was a reception and dinner hosted by Kibun USA and Sysco. Also on hand was NACUFS Pacific Region President and USC Hospitality Assistant Vice President Kris Klinger, who welcomed all guests to the ChefNet Conference. Mr. Klinger highlighted the importance of food in our society and professional development for culinarians. The dinner was a Blended Burger Bash and was provided by the Mushroom Council and Chef Lance Avery from Big Fork Brands. These "blended" burgers are an extension of the protein flip concept developed

by Menus of Change, and featured 30 percent grains and neutral flavoured mushroom duxelles in place of the animal protein, which increased flavor and umami while reducing calories and cholesterol. Options included USC's famous Chicken and Waffle slider, a Turkey Tikki Masala burger and a Gastropub style Burger with Bloody Mary Dust.

On Tuesday, June 7th the program started with the SoCal Chef's Networking Breakfast, provided by Chef James Bailey and ThinkCulinary. The breakfast featured Market Citrus Salad, an Old School Smoked Fish Platter, Heirloom Bloody Mary Gazpacho and 5AM Breakfast Ramen complete with Chicharon Hash Browns. After breakfast, Chef Robert Reid CEC, CCA, AAC did a presentation on Modern Cooking Techniques. During the conference Chef Robert provided several demonstrations. He highlighted the benefits of sous vide cooking and shared his knowledge on hydrocolloids. During one of his demonstrations he showed several types of spearification techniques and provided chefs with the opportunity to try spearification themselves.

Midday, the participants got a rare look at the USC Hospitality Teaching Garden which features 2700 plants growing in vertical hydroponic towers and is operated by Chef Eric Ernest and Niels Thorlaksson from L.A. Urban Farms. Niels provided a garden tour to the chefs and described the amazing product that is grown and eaten right on the USC Campus. ChefNet participants assisted with the weeks harvest and planting. After the garden tour lunch was served by Sysco Chef Kevin Cloud and Michagan State Corporate Chef Kurt Kwiatkowski. The Farm to Fork cuisine was created with bio diverse and local product right from the USC Teaching Garden.

In the afternoon a team from Santa Monica Seafood, including Mel Carrasquillo and John Mathews, did a presentation on sustainable seafood, setting up a sustainable seafood program for a large organization and provided whole fish butcher demonstrations on a whole yellowtail and a konpachi from Japan.

The afternoon session on Strengths Based Leadership was provided by keynote speaker Josh Allen Dykstra, Co-CEO of Forte and Co-CEO of Strengthscope. Mr. Dykstra provides organizations and leaders a platform to leverage their strengths as multipliers to productivity. He provided the chefs with an inspirational session on finding personal strengths and implementing strengths in the workplace.

The evening concluded at Gualaguetza Autentica Comida Oaxaquena. Chef Eric invited the chefs to taste traditional Oaxacan moles and explore the traditions on Oaxaca in their interactive marketplace.

Wednesday's (June 8th) program started with a presentation at the Santa Monica Farmers Market provided by LA Specialty. The Santa Monica Farmers Market is the largest grower only certified farmers market of Southern California. The market is popular among local chefs and lovers of local cuisine. After returning from the Santa Monica Farmers Market, several different vendors presented themselves at the Vendor Networking Lunch & Learn presented by Dannon Barilla

Pasta and Wild Planet. Chefs, vendors and USC staff had the opportunity to connect, learn and taste new products in the market which are largely based on stealth health strategies, plant based cooking and artisanal products that are flavor forward.

The afternoon presentations on the June 8th were provided by a panel of American Academy of Chefs members. Chef Mark Spelman CEC, CCA, AAC Chef Stafford DeCambra CEC, CCE, CCA, AAC combined their knowledge in educating the chefs in KC and F4/F5 competitions. Chef Mark and Chef Stafford provided tips on preparing for ACF competitions and discussed at length the judging process from floor judging to tasting. Chef Brandon Parry CEC, ACC discussed traditional table service and modern ideas for an improved guest experience. He educated the chefs on the origin of the table manners and on the general the front of house F&B operations.

Dinner that evening was hosted by US Food Fanatic Bill Brooks and his team of visiting East Coast chefs Jason Scarborough and Denny Trantham CEC, CCA, MBA. The team of USF Food Fanatics served local and organic products in a play on Modern Street Food and social type of setting. The food served was inspired by the Asian cuisine with a Southern twist, serving several different types of Vietnamese Spring Rolls, a Bahn Mi Carving Station and Seoul “Bowls” with Smoked Gochujng chicken, Bugogi Style Short rib and Ginger Sesame Prawn. Many chefs inclined that this was some of the best cuisine they have ever had and special thanks goes out to the US Food Fanatics, Chef Bill Brooks and US Foods for their generous sponsorship for the entire conference.

Chef Eric D. Ernest was quoted “We really wanted to provide access and education at a low entry cost, many times young culinarians don’t receive the true benefit of mentorship because of costs and limited programming. Many conferences in our area are focusing on non-culinary topics and don’t have the budgets to get those legacy chefs as presenters. Because of support from the CCAC and Chef Robert Philips CEC, CCA, AAC we were able to build a program that featured 5 Academy members, multiple Executive Chefs and some professional speakers. This energy and activity will result in more certifications and competitions in our region, and ultimately help us train more top notch culinarians.”

The University of Southern California is honored to host the ChefNet conference again in 2017. The planning is already underway and includes several ACF competitions.

Written by:

Chef Robert Philips CEC, CCA, AAC

Eric D. Ernest CEC, CCA

Sophie Van Geest