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Worlds of Flavor Brings Together 700 Culinary Professionals and Foodservice Executives

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The theme of the 18th Worlds of Flavor International Conference and Festival, On Fire, set out to rekindle culinary passion, set a flame under creativity, and stir the embers of varied cultures to spark innovation. By the time the conference concluded on April 22, that goal had been fulfilled for the 700 culinary professionals and foodservice executives who had spent three days at The Culinary Institute of America at Greystone. They left the Napa Valley inspired with new strategies for their business and great memories of unforgettable flavors.



Mateu Casañas Puignau of Disfrutar in Barcelona, Spain, demonstrates Cardamom and Mango Sorbet 'Bocadillos' in a session on the new Spanish cuisine.
CIA/PHIL MANSFIELD

Between the opening keynote presentation on developing a personal philosophy by CIA alumnus Enrique Olvera (1997 graduate and winner of the Diners Club Lifetime Achievement Award for Latin America) to the closing presentation by Chicago's Rick Bayless about using heritage as a building block for inspiration, 80 guest chefs and culinary experts shared their experiences, community values, and culinary directions.

"We took a deep dive into the design and evolution of modern culinary strategy," says Greg Drescher, vice president of strategic initiatives for the CIA. "Signaling concepts to watch in Europe, Latin America, and the United States, our presenters helped reframe the story of old and new, discussed how they found their voice in this conversation about tradition and invention, and gave insights into what is shaping their own culinary vision for the future."

Much of the inspiration shared revolved around new possibilities for bridging tradition and invention, as was demonstrated throughout the

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conference. A few highlights include:

- **Creating New Gastronomic Identities: The DNA of Restaurants We Love**, with Jeremiah Stone and Fabian von Hauske, Dominique Crenn, and Elena Arzak
- **What's Happening in France and Why Should You Rethink Everything You Think You Know about French Cuisine**, with David Toutain and Daniel Barotier
- **From the Andes to the Amazon: A Showcase of Culinary Inspirations from Peru**, with Virgilio Martinez, Mitsuharu Tsumura, and Pedro Miguel Schiaffino '97

Attendees include chefs from major national chains (including The Cheesecake Factory, Darden, and KFC), college and university dining (including University of California, Indiana University, and Boston College), and independent restaurants from all across the country. They all had the opportunity interact with guest chefs during kitchen workshops held in the college's famed teaching kitchen. Because of the limited number of people at each session, this format encourages questions, demonstrates detailed techniques, and develops networking relationships that lead to new business concepts. The workshops included:

- **The Jewels between the Pacific Oceans and the Caribbean Sea: Discovering Colombian and Panamanian Cuisine**—Aldolfo Garcia '88 discussed the versatility of yucca and demonstrated Carimañolas and Enyucado
- **Vegetables, the Ultimate Canvas for Creativity**—Annie Pettry combined bright fresh flavors, the products of the South, and an avant-garde style to Carrots with Buttermilk Ricotta and Collard Green Za'atar
- **Soul Food at Its Best**—Tanya Holland put an innovative twist on comforting soul classics: Jerk Baby Back Ribs with Pineapple Salsa and Spicy Green Coleslaw

Videos from the conference's live webcast are available on the Worlds of Flavor website. If you did not attend, you can still view all of the general sessions.

Plans for the 2017 program were also announced. Next April 26 to 28, the food world will gather again to hear the latest trends and sample tastes related to the theme, World Flavors: Casual by Design. Additional information will be available this summer.

For 18 years, Worlds of Flavor has been considered by the industry to be America's most influential professional forum on world cuisines, food cultures, and flavor trends. It is the flagship event on the CIA's Industry Leadership calendar, which includes a dozen national conferences, retreats, and industry leadership initiatives each year that address issues and trends related to flavor development and world cultures, health and wellness, foodservice menu research, sustainability, and collaborations between agriculture and restaurant kitchens.

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