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Twelve Chefs Selected for National Pizza Contest Finals for Innovative Recipes Showcasing Real California Cheeses

Fifth Annual Real California Pizza Contest to award \$30,000 to champions for Cal-Mex, Plant-Forward and California-Inspired Pizza foodservice concepts

Tracy, Calif. – June 29, 2023 – The California Milk Advisory Board (CMAB) today announced the 12 finalists for the 2023 Real California Pizza Contest (RCPC) – the fifth annual nationwide search for the best foodservice pizza recipes that include the most innovative uses of Real California cow’s milk cheeses. At stake is \$30,000 in prize money as well as the prestige of winning one of the country’s most coveted pizza competitions.

These finalists will compete in three categories during a live bake-off event at the Culinary Institute of America’s Copia campus in Napa, Calif. Each category winner will receive \$5,000 and the Grand Prize Winner, selected from the three category winners, will win an additional \$10,000. Remaining finalists each will receive \$500.

The 2023 RCPC finalists are:

Cal-Mex Category

- Ahmad Butler, Miller Butler, San Pedro, Calif.

- Bill Crawford, Righteous Slice, Rexburg, Idaho
- Chris Decker, Truly Pizza, Dana Point, Calif.
- Marcus Medina, Hella Pie Pizza, Tracy, Calif.

Plant-Forward Category

- Audrey Kelly, Audrey Jane’s Pizza Garage, Boulder, Colo.
- Giovanni Labbate, Tievoli Pizza Bar, Palatine, Ill.
- Jordan Lawson, La Fiamma Wood Fired Pizza, Bellingham, Wash.
- Lars Smith, State of Mind Public House, Los Altos, Calif.

The REAL Californian Category

- Charles Cullison, Charlie’s Pizzeria, Kingman, Ariz.
- Matt Hutchinson, Pizaro’s Pizza, Houston, Texas
- Peter Reinhart, Johnson & Wales University, Charlotte, N.C.
- Vincent Sbarro, Vinnie’s Pizzeria & Forno di Sbarro, Concord, Calif.

“Pizza’s global appeal and ability to highlight a wide range of flavors, cuisines and inspiration is reflected in this year’s entries. We’re inspired by the creativity and innovation that went into these recipes, which represent a spectrum of ingredients and flavor combinations all united by California cheeses,” said Mike Gallagher, Business and Market Development Consultant for the CMAB. “As the nation’s leading producer of Mozzarella cheese and second largest cheese producer, the CMAB recognizes that pizza is an important category for our foodservice business. We are thrilled to have such a diverse breadth of culinary backgrounds and pizzaiolo experience in the finalist group and are looking forward to seeing them in action.”

The bake-off finals event takes place August 2, 2023, at the Culinary Institute of America at Copia in Napa, Calif., where finalists will prepare and bake their entries onsite for blind evaluation by a panel of expert judges, which includes Tony Gemignani, chef, restaurateur, international pizza authority and President of the World Pizza Champions; Glenn Cybulski, certified pizzaiolo and award-winning executive chef; and David Jacobson, 2022 RCPC Grand Prize Winner. The judges chose the 12 finalists from more than 150 blind-judged entries from throughout the United States.

Additional details on the bake-off, chef finalists and CMAB’s foodservice support are available at [Real California Pizza Contest](#).

California is a reliable, consistent source of sustainable dairy products used by chefs throughout the world. As the nation’s largest dairy state, California boasts an impressive lineup of award-winning cheesemakers and dairy processors, that are helping to drive dining innovation.

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About Real California Milk/the California Milk Advisory Board

The California Milk Advisory Board (CMAB), an instrumentality of the California Department of Food and Agriculture, is funded by the state’s dairy farm families who lead the nation in sustainable dairy farming practices. With a vision to nourish the world with the wholesome

goodness of Real California Milk, the CMAB's programs focus on increasing demand for California dairy products in the state, across the U.S. and around the world through advertising, public relations, research, and retail and foodservice promotional programs.

The Foodservice Division of the CMAB supports foodservice operators and distributors that use Real California dairy products. The CMAB offers marketing and promotional support for foodservice operators that purchase dairy products with the Real California Milk seal, which means they are made with 100 percent milk from California's more than 1,100 family dairy farms, using some of the most sustainable dairy practices in the nation.

For more information on sourcing cheese from California, contact the foodservice team at 209.883.6455 (MILK), businessdevelopment@cmab.net or RealCaliforniaMilk.com/Foodservice, [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).

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