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**CHEF LEAH SCURTO WINS GRAND PRIZE IN TOURNAMENT OF CHAMPIONS
PIZZA CONTEST SPONSORED BY REAL CALIFORNIA MILK**

*Scurto Earns Trip to Italy to Compete in 2024 Caputo Cup Pizza Competition;
Two Chef Teams Win in Three-Cheese Pizza Bake-Off Tie*

Napa, Calif. (October 18, 2023) – The California Milk Advisory Board (CMAB) Tuesday crowned the Grand Prize winner of the Real California Pizza Contest Tournament of Champions foodservice competition in an event challenging 10 past Real California Pizza Contest champions to create the quintessential California pizza using cow’s milk cheeses from California.

Chef Leah Scurto, owner of PizzaLeah in Windsor, Calif., won the contest’s Grand Prize for her interpretation of the REAL Californian pizza, *The Nut-torius F.I.G.* Scurto will receive an all-expense paid trip to Italy to compete as a CMAB-sponsored chef in the 2024 Caputo Cup Pizza Competition, Italy’s most renowned pizza contest.

The Nut-torius F.I.G. is a sweet ode to the signature California fruit. It features Real California Mozzarella, Fontina, and Feta cheeses to balance fresh black mission figs, crispy Italian sausage,

minced garlic, and olive oil. It is topped with raw chopped almonds and aromatic julienned sage leaves.

Scurto is a two-time Real California Pizza Contest Champion, winning the REAL Californian category in 2021 and the Plant-Forward category in 2022.

The nine other returning champions each received \$1,000 for their participation in the invitational bake-off.

Following the main competition, the 10 chefs competed in a separate Three-Cheese pizza bake-off, where they were randomly paired and charged with crafting a signature three-cheese pizza using pre-selected cheeses made with Real California Milk.

Two chef teams tied for the highest score. Scurto and Bill Crawford, from Rexburg, Idaho, highlighted California Mozzarella, Dry Jack, and Provolone in their winning pie. The other winning team was Spencer Glenn, from Monterey, Calif., and David Jacobson, from Oakland, Calif., who featured California Mozzarella, Ricotta, and truffle infused Toma.

All four chefs took home \$1,500 for their Three-Cheese bake-off win.

“We are always impressed with the vision and creativity of our chef community, and this was no exception. While we crowned one Real California Pizza Grand Champion, each returning champion brought a unique lens to their interpretation of a pizza representative of the Golden State,” said Mike Gallagher, Business and Market Development Consultant for the CMAB. “Ultimately, California cheese and dairy products are the real winner in this showcase of how they taste and perform with some of the state’s most iconic ingredients.”

The competition, which was held at The Culinary Institute of America at Copia in Napa, Calif., was judged by a distinguished panel of pizza experts including 13-time World Pizza Champion and owner of 22 culinary concepts, Tony Gemignani; certified pizzaiolo and award-winning executive chef Glenn Cybulski; and award-winning Pizzaiola and 2019 Caputo Cup Champion Laura Meyer.

Judges based scores on a range of factors, focusing on the inventive use of cheeses made with Real California dairy, taste, texture, and presentation.

“California is the nation’s number one producer of milk and Mozzarella, so the pizza industry is very important to our business,” said John Talbot, CEO of the CMAB. “We are committed to remaining national leaders in producing dairy products that pizza chefs trust nationwide.”

The full list of participants in the 2023 Real California Pizza Contest Tournament of Champions:

- **TOURNAMENT OF CHAMPIONS GRAND PRIZE WINNER:**
Leah Scurto, 2021 & 2022 Category Winner, Windsor, Calif.
- Bill Crawford, 2023 Grand Prize Winner, Rexburg, Idaho
- David Jacobson, 2022 Grand Prize Winner, Oakland, Calif.

- Thomas Garnick, 2019 Grand Prize Winner, Tucson, Ariz.
- Spencer Glenn, 2021 Grand Prize Winner, Monterey, Calif.
- Giovanni Labbate, 2019 & 2023 Category Winner, Palatine, Ill.
- Marcus Medina, 2022 Category Winner, Tracy, Calif.
- Lars Smith, 2020 Category Winner, Los Altos, Calif.
- Vincent Sbarro, 2023 Category Winner, Concord, Calif.
- Ricky Webster, 2020 Grand Prize Winner, Spokane, Wash.

Details on the bake-off event, chefs and the CMAB are available on the [Real California Pizza Contest microsite](#). An online recipe book with all 10 pizzas, as well as exclusive videos from the contest, will be available in January 2024.

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 help drive dining innovation nationwide.

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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's sustainable 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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