

*photo of
Chamee Ratnayake,
Chair of the
Auckland Young Chefs Club*



August 2025

NZCHEFS NEWSLETTER



Dear Members

Exciting end to 2025 for members

The NZ Chefs AGM is being held on 16 September, and we thank our loyal sponsor **Moffat NZ** for hosting this event. We are delighted to welcome Chamee Ratnayake, the first Chair of the Auckland Young Chefs Club as our special guest. Many of you will remember Chamee and the cheery, helpful AUT students assisting at the NZ Chefs Championships. Chamee will present a short overview of the Club's set up and activities including the mission of a group of young chefs to attend the Bill Gallagher Forum at the Worldchefs Congress in Wales in May 2026.

Closer to home and in time, Sam Linstrom from Kingi is representing New Zealand at the Global Chefs Challenge Pacific Rim Young Chef semi-final. Sam is training with NZ Chefs Board member Geoff Scott at AUT. This event is being held 4 and 5 October in Rarotonga. Many thanks and congratulations to Karlene Taokia, President Cook Islands Chefs Association, for her hard work bringing the competition together. *Good Luck Sam, Thanks Geoff and sponsors: Kingi, AUT and NZ Chefs.*

NZ Chefs Culinarian of the Year 2023 and esteemed Bocuse d'Or Coach, Ken O'Connell, is training the NZ Chefs 2025 team competing at the FHC Shanghai International Culinary Championship. NZ Chefs received an invitation to compete in this Invite-only championship. NZ Chefs expresses its appreciation and thanks to the Championship organisers. The competition has been held 24 times at FHC Shanghai Food Trade Show. Its purpose is to cultivate young chefs and strengthen the development of Chinese-Western food and has become a highly valuable international cooking competition. *Best wishes* to Will Mordido, Sam Gradowski-Smith, and Emily Morgan as they train and compete in Shanghai. The team is required to cook a set banquet for 12 people within the timeframe. Will has competed twice at the Bocuse d'Or final in Lyon, Sam is NZ Chef of the Year 2025, and Emily is representing the North Island at the Nestlé Professional Golden Chef Hat Award in September 2025. Emily was a close runner-up in the 2024 NGCHA at the Australasian final. *Thanks Ken, for coaching the team.*

The compliments continue to roll in for the NZ Chefs Championships. NZ Chefs thanks again go to all involved and who made the show a success and again, acknowledges sponsor's generosity and support – see the sponsors page in this issue. Worldchefs offered to fast track eight chefs who attended the Worldchefs Judges seminar to Worldchefs Regional Judge status. Dr Rick Stephen requested these chefs were chosen by the President, Chief Judge and Competition Organiser with recommendations from Rick.

'Proud to be a Chef' has been launched in New Zealand. The 2025 Yearbook is amazing – what a great opportunity for young chefs. If you're a young chef we strongly suggest you check out the QR code next.

Diary these important dates now

2025

16 September, NZ Chefs AGM at Moffat, 4 Waipuna Rd, Mt Wellington 5pm for 5.30pm

4 and 5 October, Global Chef Challenge – Pacific Rim semi-final, Rarotonga

12–14 November, Food and Hospitality, China

2026

16–19 May, Worldchefs Congress and Global Chef Finals, Newport, Wales

3, 4 and 5 October, NZ Chefs Championships, MIT Auckland

Big shout out to the Young Chefs team for a successful fund-raising Bake Sale.

Next up – a Black Tie Dinner, so be sure to book your tickets early



Yours in culinary kindness

Shannon Fryer

NZ Chefs Association
President



American Culinary Federation (ACF) Conference 2025 Review

by Cheryl and Chef Andy Cordier

The ACF conference held in Las Vegas during the last week of July this year was a real highlight on our calendar. Attending took lots of planning but was most certainly worth it. The conference started off with the first day for Culinary Educators specifically. There were several speakers as well as break away rooms. With both me and Chef Andy attending we were able to split and attend two simultaneously. The topics covered supporting students with neurodiversity, “chunking” courses i.e. making them into “bite sized” pieces of learning and spending more time on the “why” we do certain things in cooking. I loved the concept of “Immerse yourself Monday” -getting students to reflect on something they cooked, their parent or grandparent served or if they ate out in a restaurant. Questioning students on how it could have been improved? Supporting students to become critical thinkers and constantly having to taste their food and give feedback. They referred to a free website www.chefsvillage.org where all chefs can become contributors to support future chefs in the industry.

A highlight speaker for us was guest speaker Tiffany Poe (She is a qualified Chef) who has so much experience with AI and how it is impacting how our students learn, and how we need to teach. She made some interesting observations: A chef’s brain is programmed to write recipes- this is essentially what an AI chatbot does – writes “recipes”. She said that a chef is the only profession that uses all 5 senses in their jobs every day and thus chefs are naturally aligned with AI functionality, chefs have to think and act fast and often on the fly with only the knowledge they have. She recommended overlaying AI into every aspect of the students learning. She said all students are already using AI, so we need to get them to think critically. Ask them to show the prompts they use for their assignments, then ask them to evaluate what the AI chatbot dished up to them and use their critical thinking competencies to improve on what the chatbot recommended. So essentially to use AI to plan and create ideas and then for students to add some higher-level thought. Teaching student’s recipe adaptation was highlighted as key skill. i.e. Change recipes for different types of establishments, allergens, lifestyles and of course religious adaptations.

Using AI to adapt your teaching style to support ADA learners as 1 size no longer fits all in teaching and using AI to find gaps in your teaching and to help remove the fear of failure for students.

The following 4 conference days were action packed with a range of different speakers covering topics like Mental Wellness – another free resource www.chowco.org They had great ideas on creating a safe place of work, one where you cannot fix a problem, but you can support someone and refer them to a place where they can get help.



American Culinary Federation
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CONVENTION**



Paris Hotel, Las Vegas



The speakers included invited chefs from different cultures and their types and ranges of food. Speakers from the Research Chefs Association talked about launching food products and the Culinary Gold Standard. A huge overriding emphasis on Sustainability was also a theme for the conference.

The second AI talk was more about using AI to analyse kitchen workflow, whereby making a few changes you could reduce walking time for example to a fridge. So, using AI to identify ways to improve thus hopefully adding more time into a chef's day. A suggested idea was to create your own custom GBT and adding all your kitchens SOP's and recipes, thus enabling new employees to quickly find what they need to do the job. Again you can create a Clone Chef as an avatar to demonstrate certain tasks and shorten the time for training. This could be made into an app for your hospitality business.

We had the privilege of meeting Andy Cuthbert WorldChefs President and Ragnor Fridriksson General Manager and having some discussions around WorldChefs and the future of chefs. There were a number Culinary Competitions as well as an excellent expo on at the same time. We watched some amazing competition work and met a range of providers to the Culinary Industry.

One of the standout take homes for us, was when they invited a 90-year-old retired chef onto the stage. He had been called before the conference and asked if there was anything that he regretted in his career. His one regret was never being certified as a Chef. They then gave him an Honorary Culinary Certification. There was not a dry eye in the room and believe us, we were again inspired to continue teaching and training chefs for the future.

Chef Andy Cordier, ICS with Harry Linzmayer, Continental Director / The Americas and Worldchefs President Andy Cuthbert



Ready to *step up* to the plate?



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ALL EXPENSES PAID CULINARY
ADVENTURE IN MELBOURNE

32 *finalists* 
SELECTED FROM AUSTRALIA
AND NEW ZEALAND

Step up to the plate, NZ

APPLICATIONS NOW OPEN FOR 1ST - 4TH FEBRUARY 2026 PROGRAM

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TO BE ELIGIBLE, YOU MUST BE GRADUATING OR HAVE GRADUATED IN 2025 FROM
A RECOGNISED COOKING OR PATISSERIE COURSE IN AUSTRALIA OR NEW ZEALAND.



 **'26**
**PROUD TO
BE A CHEF**

[here](#)

In this episode, Ragnar speaks with Karl Guggenmos, a Certified Master Chef, visionary leader, and culinary medicine expert with over 60 years of experience in the food industry. Beginning his culinary journey as an apprentice in Europe, Karl became the Dean of Culinary Education at Johnson & Wales University, shaping the future of chefs' education. Karl has been a driving force behind the growing field of culinary medicine, which blends the art of cooking with the science of nutrition to promote health and prevent chronic disease. Tune in to hear Karl discuss how culinary medicine is transforming the future of food and health, and discover the importance of breaking down silos between these fields on Episode 130: The Power of the Two White Coats: Exploring Health Meets Food with Culinary Medicine Expert Karl Guggenmos..

[here](#)

On this episode, Ragnar speaks with French physical chemist Hervé This, founder of molecular gastronomy, molecular cooking, and Note by Note cooking, three distinct approaches that apply scientific understanding to study, improve, and reimagine the culinary arts. A visionary in culinary innovation, Hervé was recently awarded the prestigious Sonning Prize for his work to renew and scientifically question the foundations of culinary knowledge and gastronomy. Tune in to explore how Note by Note cooking is reshaping culinary creativity and sustainability, and discover the possibilities for chefs to take full control over flavor, color, nutrition, consistency, and texture—one compound at a time. World on a Plate is supported by Nestlé Professional and Electrolux Food Foundation.



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Australasian Tapas Competition

The annual Australasian Tapas competition was held recently at Ignite Colleges. Jessabel Granada, from Nanam Restaurant in Auckland, won the competition with her dish 'Storyteller'—Wagyu beef sausage in tacos, chipotle mayonnaise, coriander, peanut butter sauce and pickles. Second was Andrea Vignali, from Al Dente Enoteca, Melbourne, with her dish 'Smoke and Memory'. The inspiration came from the real meaning of Tapa, from the word Tapo— the lid the Spanish would use to cover their glass of sherry. Andrea wanted to respect this tradition and give it a twist. Her dish was a kangaroo tartare tartlet sitting on top of a cocktail and all served under a glass cover filled with smoke. Imagine the surprise to the senses when the glass cover is lifted.

Best Wishes

to both at the World Tapas final in
Valladolid, Spain during November



Cheryl's Culinary Chronicles

Food Styling & Content Creation:

The Rise of the Chef-Creator

Once upon a time, chefs dreamt of earning Michelin stars. Now? They dream of going viral while sprinkling salt in slow motion. Welcome to 2025, where your food doesn't just need to taste good—it needs to look good on a 6.5-inch phone screen.

This is the age of the Chef-Creator: part culinary artist, part lighting technician, part performance wizard. If you can flambé AND film it in slo-mo while the background track slaps? You, my friend, are employable.

"But I'm Not an Influencer"

Oh sweet, humble culinary lamb. You don't have to dance on TikTok to win the content game (though we'll clap if you do). What you do need is an understanding that content is currency. And the good news? Chefs have buckets of it just lying around.

- Your prep station? Behind-the-scenes gold.
- That perfect quenelle? Cinematic glory.
- Your burned batch of croissants? Relatable content = engagement magnet.

Rule #1: The Camera Eats First

This isn't just a trendy saying anymore—it's a business model.

Food styling used to be for magazines. Now it's for every single person with a smartphone, a spatula, and a dream.

You'll need to learn:

- How to plate for contrast, colour and height (that beige-on-beige stew? Not gonna cut it).
- What props scream "rustic farmhouse" and which scream "weird hospital cafeteria".
- How to coax steam out of a dish for that dramatic 'just served' shot (tip: microwave wet cotton balls).

Rule #2: Your Kitchen is a Film Set
Lights, camera, spatula!



Here's your toolkit:

- A basic tripod (unless you enjoy filming with one hand while flipping an omelette with the other)
- Natural light near a window OR a ring light for dark, 11pm creations
- A clean-ish surface (no one wants to see yesterday's spaghetti sauce under today's matcha tart)

Bonus points if your pets photobomb your shoot.
Double points if they wear chef hats.

Rule #3: Keep It Real. But Pretty.

Sure, those perfectly symmetrical pancakes are satisfying—but you know what really connects? A lopsided tart, a fallen soufflé, or you yelling "WHY IS THIS ON FIRE" followed by a sheepish grin. You're not just creating food—you're creating moments, stories, little edible dramas. Your audience wants to see the process, not just the final plate.

"But My Food Is Ugly!"

Stop that. No food is ugly—it's just under-lit. Or sitting on the wrong plate. Or tragically garnished. Pro stylist tricks:

- Use small portions on large plates
- Garnish with height (pile, don't sprinkle)
- Napkins and crumbs make things feel "real" and "lived in"—just not manky

Also: white plates are your friend. So are herbs. So is cheese. (Isn't cheese always the hero?)

You're Not Just a Chef—You're a Portfolio

Think of every photo or video you post as a portfolio piece.

You're not just building a feed—you're building a future:

- Job opportunities
- Brand collaborations
- Recipe licensing deals
- Your own product line (your chilli oil deserves its own fan club)

And trust us: brands are watching. They're not just looking for skilled cooks. They're looking for culinary storytellers who can bring food to life.

Common Mistakes That Make Us Cry Into Our Risotto

Let's avoid these:

- Overediting: When your pasta looks like radioactive rubber, you've gone too far.
- Too many hashtags: #foodie #delish #nomnomnom #blessed #YOLO #sendhelp... STOP.
- Silence: Tell us what we're looking at. Is that a meatball or a molten planet? Context matters.

Also, please—clean your camera lens. It's the difference between "professional food creative" and "grandma's holiday snaps from 2009."

What If You Hate Social Media?

Good news! You don't need to be everywhere.

Pick one platform:

- TikTok = fast and fun
- Instagram = polished and pretty
- YouTube = tutorials and talking
- Pinterest = aesthetic overload
- LinkedIn = where chefs pretend to be serious business people



Find your audience and feed them. Literally and figuratively.

Your Phone Is Your Sous Chef

Seriously. With just a smartphone, free editing apps, and decent light, you can launch a personal brand, a content business, or even an entire side hustle. Some chefs are now earning more from content creation than restaurant shifts. (We see you, Chef TikTok with your branded spatulas.)

And don't be surprised when people start calling you an "influencer." Just reply, "I prefer the term culinary content strategist with strong plating skills and passive income goals."

International Culinary Studio: Where Creators Are Cooked to Perfection

Thanks to Cheryl Cordier

From The International Culinary School



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Coconut Kumara & Lemongrass Soup

As the temperatures drop, warm up your menu with this winter favourite. This Coconut Kumara & Lemongrass Soup is the perfect cold-weather comfort – rich, creamy, and packed with flavour.

Infused with fragrant lemongrass and ginger, and built on a smooth coconut base, this soup delivers a warming, nourishing experience your customers will love.

- ✓ Ideal for cafés, catering, or seasonal specials
- ✓ Vegetarian-friendly
- ✓ Big flavour, simple prep

Serve it with crusty bread or a swirl of coconut cream for extra appeal.

A rich coconut and kumara soup infused with fragrant lemongrass & ginger

Ingredients

25g Butter

200g Onion, diced

3g Salt

1 Lemongrass stalk,
finely diced

10g Ginger, crushed

1kg Golden kuṁmara, peeled,
cut into medium dice

15g MAGGI® Vegetable Booster

1L Water

400g MAGGI® Premium
Coconut Milk Powder

Pepper to taste

Method

In a medium sized saucepan heat the butter, add the chopped onion and salt and sauté for 2–3 minutes until golden brown.

Add finely sliced lemongrass and ginger and sauté for 1 minute.

Add the diced kuṁmara, MAGGI® Vegetable Booster, water and MAGGI® Premium Coconut Milk Powder.

Cook until the kuṁmara is tender. With a stick blender, blend the soup till smooth and season to taste.

Chefs tips

For a chunky soup, remove a third of the kuṁmara before blending then add back to blended soup mix.

Garnish with fresh cream or coconut cream and sliced lemongrass.

Learn more about our products today [here](#)



Recipe and photo by Karl Seidel
Culinary Advisory Chef, Nestlé Professional



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