

ROOTS OF CULTURE SEAS OF DISCOVERY

Mediterranean Culinary Tradition,
Exchange and Invention in the 21st Century

NAPA VALLEY | NOVEMBER 5-7, 2025



Webcast Schedule

All times below listed in Pacific Standard Time (PST).

Wednesday, November 5

3:15 PM **Welcome to Worlds of Flavor | Introduction of Platinum Sponsors - [Catalonia, World Region of Gastronomy 2025](#) | [Kikkoman Sales USA](#)**

Speaker: **Robert E. Jones '20** (Vice President, Strategic Partnerships, Industry Leadership, and Impact; CIA; Hyde Park, NY)

Opening Remarks and Introduction of Programming

Speaker: **Jennifer Breckner** (Director of Programs and Special Projects, Center for Food & Beverage Leadership, CIA; Napa, CA)

3:30 PM **General Session I**

Ecolab Theater (1st floor)

Flavors in Translation: Navigating Old Worlds, New Ideas

The 2025 Worlds of Flavor Conference and Festival opens with an exploration of how culinary heritage and modern creativity intersect across the Mediterranean's diverse cultures with lessons for foodservice operators across the industry. This broad session will explore the spiritual and cultural dimensions of food within sacred spaces around the Mediterranean, demonstrate traditional Turkish dishes inspired by a contemporary, cross-cultural lens and open fire; and explore how coastal Italian tradition found a home on American menus. Together, they'll set the stage for a conference that celebrates the Mediterranean not just as a place, but as a dynamic, and ever-changing idea – where ancient techniques, bold flavors, and forward-thinking innovation converge to shape the future of global foodservice.

Host: **Jennifer Breckner** (Director of Programs and Special Projects, Center for Food & Beverage Leadership, CIA; Napa, CA)

Presenters: **Jody Eddy** (Cookbook Author and Recipe Developer; Braga, Portugal)

Civan Er (Chef-Restaurateur, Yeni Lokanta and Yeni; Istanbul, Turkey, and London, UK)

Paul Bartolotta (Co-Founder and Owner, The Bartolotta Restaurants; Milwaukee, WI)

4:30 PM **30-minute webcast break**

5:00 PM **General Session II**

Ecolab Theater (1st floor)

Eat the World: From Mediterranean Gastronomy to American Menus

As global travel and media expand our curiosity about international cuisines, the Mediterranean offers a rich gateway to understanding how food connects us to culture, community, sustainability, and history. From Sicily to Portugal and beyond, time-tested practices – like seasonal cooking, minimal waste, and plant-forward menus – are inspiring American chefs and food professionals to rethink how we cook, eat, and source ingredients. Join us to explore how these dynamic Mediterranean foodways are shaping a more flavorful, responsible, healthy, and globally connected future.

Moderator: **Frances Kim** (Digital Director, *Saveur*; New York, NY)

Panelists: **Melek Erdal** (Food Writer, Cook, and Storyteller; London, UK)

Fabrizia Lanza (Executive Director, Anna Tasca Lanza Cooking School; Sicily, Italy)

Nader Mehravari (Persian Food Scholar; Davis, CA)

George McLeod (Co-Founder and Chef, SEM; Lisbon, Portugal)

6:00 PM **Webcast Concludes for the Evening**

Thursday, November 6

8:45 AM **General Session III**

Ecolab Theater (1st floor)

Cultural Roots, Culinary Reach: Mediterranean Global Flavors Driving U.S. Menu Innovation

Mediterranean cuisine, which stands out for its vibrant diversity, healthful appeal, and deep cultural roots, continues to gain traction across the U.S., from independent restaurants to national chains and retail shelves. In this session, industry leaders share how they've successfully introduced Mediterranean flavors to American diners. Through real-world examples, they'll highlight key lessons learned – what works, what doesn't, and how to navigate the path from niche to mainstream.

Moderator: **Erica Holland-Toll** (Culinary Director, The Culinary Edge; San Francisco, CA)

Panelists: **Bob Andersen** (President, The Great Greek Mediterranean Grill; West Palm Beach, FL)

Rose Previte (Chef-Restaurateur, Maydān, and Cookbook Author, Washington, DC)

9:20 AM **10-minute webcast break**

9:30 AM **Seminar 1**

Ecolab Theater (1st floor)

The Ancient Roots of Umami

Long before umami was named the "fifth taste," ancient cultures across the Mediterranean, Middle East, and Asia were already exploring its savory essence through fermented condiments like Roman garum, Arab murri, and East Asian fish sauces and soy sauce. These culinary innovations, though developed independently, reveal a shared human instinct to deepen flavor and preserve food through fermentation. The demos will trace how ideas, ingredients, and techniques flow across borders, shaping the umami-rich traditions that continue to influence Mediterranean-inspired cuisine today, showcasing how tradition and innovation make their way onto today's menus.

Host: **Andrew Hunter '88** (Corporate Chef, Kikkoman Sales USA; Los Angeles, CA)

Presenters: **Nathaniel Malone** (Corporate Executive Chef, Creative Dining Services; Indianapolis, IN)

Jordon Ezra King (Recipe Developer and Writer; London, UK)

Sponsored by Kikkoman Sales USA

10:30 AM **30-minute webcast break**

11:00 AM **General Session IV**

Ecolab Theater (1st floor)

The Heart of the Silk Road: How Ancient Persia and Modern Iran Shaped the Mediterranean Palate

Ancient Persia (modern-day Iran) stood at the heart of the Silk Road, quietly shaping the Mediterranean's culinary identity for centuries. Its rich traditions – from fragrant spices and tangy dairy to naturally sweet ingredients and refined cooking techniques – found their way into beloved dishes across the region, from coastal Spain to the Levant. This session explores how Persia's legacy and Iran's living culinary traditions continue to define flavors worldwide today, with saffron, rose water, yogurt, and dates now rising as key ingredients to watch in 2025.

Host/Presenter:

Nader Mehravari (Persian Cookery Expert and Practitioner; Davis, CA)

Presenters: **Hoss Zaré** (Lead Operational Training Executive Chef, Bon Appétit at Google; Mountain View, CA)

Fariba Nafissi (Chef-Owner; ZoZoBaking; Los Angeles, CA)

12:00 PM **General Session V**

Ecolab Theater (1st floor)

Hourani Wheat: Ancient Grain, Modern Uses

Hourani is a 2,000-year-old durum wheat originally farmed across the Fertile Crescent and now thriving in California's Mediterranean climate. This session traces its extraordinary journey – from ancient seed to modern table – highlighting regenerative farming practices, and this heirloom wheat's nutritional benefits and growing role in California's culinary scene, including at kitchens like The French Laundry and breweries like Hanabi Lager Company. Learn how students at the CIA Greystone campus are

engaging in R&D with Hourani through the Grain Gang, a hands-on initiative that blends sustainable agriculture with culinary innovation.

Host: **Jennifer Breckner** (Director of Programs and Special Projects, Center for Food & Beverage Leadership, CIA; Napa, CA)

Presenters: **Ryan Luttrell '99** (Lecturing Instructor, The Culinary Institute of America; St. Helena, CA)

Elizabeth DeRuff (Farmer and Founder, Honoré Farm and Mill; Marin County, CA)

12:30 PM **1 hour, 30-minute webcast break**

2:00 PM **General Session VI (2:00 – 3:00 PM)**

Ecolab Theater (1st floor)

Grains and Cultures: Bulgur and Yogurt Across Anatolia

Discover how bulgur and yogurt – two humble and foundational staples – become bold expressions of flavor, heritage, and identity in both Turkish and Kurdish cuisine and the unique ways that these cultures engage these ingredients. This session showcases how fermentation, texture, and grain selection reflect regional identities and seasonal rhythms and showcase the cultural richness of the Mediterranean.

Host: **Liz Grossman** (Freelance Writer, Editor, Storyteller; Chicago, IL)

Presenters: **Musa Dağdeviren** (Chef-Owner, Çiya Sofrası; Istanbul, Turkey)
with interpretation by Burak Epir

Melek Erdal (Food Writer, Cook, and Storyteller; London, UK)

3:00 PM **30-minute webcast break**

3:30 PM **Seminar 5**

Ecolab Theater (1st floor)

Reimagining Mediterranean Flavor with Tofu and Global Technique

This session explores the use of tofu as a versatile, plant-based protein within Mediterranean culinary frameworks. The session will also address ingredient functionality, cross-cultural flavor integration, and tofu's role in meeting contemporary menu demands for sustainability, nutrition, and plant-forward innovation.

Host: **Abby Fammartino** (Director, Health and Sustainability Program, CIA; Portland, OR)

Presenters: **Edward Lee** (Celebrity Chef, Author, and Restaurateur; Louisville, KY)

Uyen Pham '04 (Associate Professor–Culinary Arts, CIA; San Antonio, TX)

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4:30 PM **10-minute webcast break**

4:40 PM **Special Presentation: CIA Initiatives in the Mediterranean**

Presenter: **Greg Drescher** (Senior Advisor for Strategic Partnerships, Industry Leadership and Impact, CIA; Hyde Park, NY)

- 4:50 PM **General Session VII**
Ecolab Theater (1st floor)
The Greek Table: Hidden Traditions and the Chefs Who Carry Them Forward
In this dynamic culinary demonstration, chefs will explore the rich tapestry of regional Greek cuisine – from the sun-drenched flavors of Messinia and Crete to the vibrant culinary traditions of Thessaloniki and Athens – while also highlighting the profound influences of the Eastern Mediterranean, particularly Turkey. The session will delve into how these regional identities shape contemporary Greek cooking, offering insights into the chefs’ personal journeys in balancing tradition and innovation within their restaurants and with their customers, as well as illuminate the often-overlooked home cooking traditions that define the plant-forward Greek kitchen, showcasing emblematic dishes and techniques that speak to the heart of Greece’s culinary heritage.
Moderator: **Maureen Costura, PhD** (Professor-Liberal Arts, CIA; Hyde Park, NY)
Presenters: **Stavriani Zervakakou** (Chef and Founder, Aspasia Restaurant Mani; Stavri, Greece)
 Manolis Papoutsakis (Chef and Co-Owner, Pharaoh; Athens, Greece)
- 5:50 PM **Webcast Concludes for the Day**

Friday, November 7

- 8:30 AM **General Session VIII**
Ecolab Theater (1st floor)
Shared Shores, Distinct Flavors: Southern Italy and Morocco in Conversation
This session explores how Italy and Morocco draw deeply from the same Mediterranean pantry leaning on plant-rich culinary traditions that have been shaped by centuries of exchange between Southern Europe, North Africa, and the Levant, in distinct ways. It highlights how culinary innovation rooted in cultural exchange remains relevant to today’s chefs and food service operators, and how the Mediterranean continues to be a fertile ground for creativity and connection.
Host: **Chandra Ram ‘99** (Writer, Recipe Developer, Consultant; Chicago, IL)
Presenters: **Jordon Ezra King** (Recipe Developer and Writer; London, UK)
 Mourad Lahlou (Chef-Owner, Aziza and Moro; San Francisco, CA)
- 9:20 AM **10-minute webcast break**
- 9:30 AM **Seminar 8**
Ecolab Theater (1st floor)
Inside the Catalan Avant-Garde: A Mediterranean Culinary Revolution with Lessons for American Foodservice Operators
This session celebrates the artistry of Catalan cuisine, where olive oil – a symbol of health, flavor, and cultural heritage – takes center stage. Rooted in the Mediterranean and proudly aligned with European standards of quality, Catalonia is also forging

meaningful culinary connections with California, a region equally renowned for its agricultural innovation and dynamic food culture. Through refined, modern dishes and masterful technique, these demos offer a taste of how Catalonia is reimagining its culinary identity for a global audience – one that values sustainability, creativity, and excellence.

Host: **Nancy Kruse** (Menu Analyst, Food Writer, and President, The Kruse Company; St. Paul, MN)

Presenters: **Luis Roger** (Chef, BCN; Houston, TX)
Sayat Ozyilmaz '15 (Chef-Owner, Dalida; San Francisco, CA)

Sponsored by Catalonia, World Region of Gastronomy 2025

10:30 AM **30-minute webcast break**

11 AM **General Session IX**

Ecolab Theater (1st floor)

Brunch All Day! Eastern Mediterranean Inspiration, California Bounty

The Worlds of Flavor Mediterranean celebration ends with the exploration of the soulful, flavor-packed world of brunch as it is celebrated across Istanbul and the broader Mediterranean. Expect a celebration of spice, texture, and storytelling – where this morning menu becomes an all-day canvas for sustainability, hospitality, and culinary creativity.

Host/Presenter:

Nancy Kruse (Menu Analyst, Food Writer, and President, The Kruse Company; St. Paul, MN)

Presenter: **Sayat Ozyilmaz '15** (Chef-Owner, Dalida; San Francisco, CA)

11:35 AM **Concluding Remarks**

Speakers: **Jennifer Breckner** (Director of Programs and Special Projects, Center for Food & Beverage Leadership, CIA; Napa, CA)

11:45 AM **Webcast Concludes**