

THE STOCK POT

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Where New Orleans Culinary News, Ideas, and Community Come to a Boil

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ACFNO Crawfish Boil Heats Up the Chapter



Chef Ron and Charles Deal highlight a traditional crawfish boil presentation during ACFNO's April gathering at Chef Ron's Gumbo Stop.



Members pinching some tail



The Barts and Friends

From the President's Desk

Thank you to everyone who came out and helped make our recent Crawfish Boil such a success. Events like this do more than bring us together socially—they remind us of the strength of our chapter and the value of staying connected as culinarians and professionals.

What we saw at our recent Crawfish Boil was more than a successful event. It was a clear reminder of what this chapter is capable of when members show up, engage, and take ownership of where we are headed. The turnout, the energy, and the participation all pointed to something important: ACFNO is gaining momentum. Progress may not always move as quickly as we would like, but it is happening. We are rebuilding our presence and creating a chapter that is active, relevant, and worth being part of.

That kind of progress does not happen by accident. It takes participation, professionalism, and commitment from our members. As we move forward, we will continue to focus on education, certification, and engagement. Let's keep the momentum going.

Respectfully,
Chef Ron Iafrate
President

Food brings people together—but it's the passion behind it that keeps them coming back.



Recognition & Achievements

ACFNO is proud to recognize members who have renewed:

Drue Vitter
Damian Thomas
Mike Haffner
Marta Hightower

We also welcome J.D. Thomas, who recently joined our chapter and was very active with ACF in Washington State.

Your continued commitment strengthens our chapter



FROM THE BACK OFFICE

Cost, Control, and the Business of the
Kitchen

COST PRESSURES IN TODAY'S KITCHEN: DISCIPLINE IS NO LONGER OPTIONAL

Food costs continue to rise, and chefs are being forced to make harder decisions with less margin for error. Whether it is seafood, beef, poultry, dairy, or staple pantry items, volatility in pricing has become part of daily operations. The challenge is no longer just creating a good dish—it is creating a dish that can be executed consistently, priced responsibly, and sold profitably.

The pressure is not only on menu pricing. Guests still expect value, consistency, and quality every time they dine out. Simply raising prices is rarely enough. Strong kitchens are responding by tightening the fundamentals: portion control, yield awareness, waste reduction, prep discipline, and cross-utilization of ingredients. The operators who know exactly what their recipes cost, how much trim they lose, and where their highest-margin items live on the menu are the ones best positioned to hold the line.

This is where strategy matters. Smart chefs are adjusting menus in subtle but effective ways—pairing premium proteins with lower-cost accompaniments, highlighting items with stronger margins, reducing over-garnishing, and training teams to execute with consistency. In today's environment, cost control is not separate from the craft—it is part of the craft.

The margin for error is smaller than ever, and discipline in the kitchen is no longer optional—it is essential.



THE FUTURE OF ACFNO BEGINS WITH YOU

Ingredient of the Month – Oolong Tea



Oolong tea's partial oxidation creates a wide range of flavors, making it a versatile ingredient in both savory and sweet applications.

Oolong tea occupies a unique position between green and black tea, offering a wide spectrum of flavor profiles depending on its level of oxidation. Ranging from light and floral to rich and roasted, oolong provides chefs with a versatile ingredient that can be applied across both savory and sweet applications.

In the professional kitchen, oolong tea can be used as more than a beverage. It works exceptionally well as a poaching liquid for seafood and poultry, bringing subtle aromatics without overpowering the dish. It can also be infused into creams, syrups, and broths, adding depth and complexity. Its natural tannins and balanced profile make it especially effective when paired with shellfish, duck, citrus, and lightly spiced preparations.

As chefs continue to explore new ways to build flavor, oolong tea offers an opportunity to introduce nuance and refinement without adding heaviness. Whether used in sauces, desserts, or as part of a composed dish, it is an ingredient that rewards precision and restraint.

ACFNO ELECTIONS ARE APPROACHING

As ACFNO continues to build momentum, upcoming chapter elections will play an important role in shaping the future of the organization. This is an opportunity for members to take an active role in leadership and contribute to the continued growth, professionalism, and direction of the chapter.

We are looking for members who are committed, dependable, and willing to contribute beyond their own kitchens. Leadership within ACFNO is not about titles –it is about service, accountability, and helping deliver value to the membership through education, events, and engagement.

Positions open for consideration include:

President: Provides leadership and direction and represents ACFNO

Vice President: Supports operations and coordinates programs

Secretary: Maintains records, minutes, and communications

Treasurer: Oversees finances, reporting, and accountability

Sergeant-at-Arms: Maintains order and meeting structure

All candidates must be active members in good standing.

Members who are interested in serving are encouraged to begin considering how they can contribute and help move the chapter forward.

“A strong kitchen is not built on talent alone, but on standards that are upheld when no one is watching.”



MARK YOUR CALENDAR: UPCOMING CHAPTER MEETINGS

Monday, May 4, 2026
Chef Ron's Gumbo Stop
2309 North Causeway Boulevard
Monday, June 2, 2026
Chef Ron's Gumbo Stop
2309 North Causeway Boulevard



On the Front Burner

Honoring Service Beyond the Kitchen

Celebrating Paula's Humanitarian Service

Paula, treasurer of her local American Culinary Federation (ACF) chapter, has spent years helping others. She balances the chapter's books and ensures funds for training, scholarships, and outreach. The ACF, founded in 1929, promotes the professional image of chefs and now has more than 15,000 members; its mission is to educate culinarians at every level. Paula embodies this mission by using her culinary skills to uplift the underprivileged and working poor.

DePaul Community Health Centers (DCHC) recently honored Paula for many years of humanitarian service. DCHC, which grew from the Daughters of Charity, has provided health care in New Orleans for over 185 years and offers comprehensive care regardless of ability to pay. Its outreach program sends mobile units into neighborhoods, providing free screenings and connecting residents with primary and preventive care. Paula's ACF chapter frequently partners with these efforts, providing food and nutrition education.

Paula's contributions include organizing charity dinners and food drives, mentoring youth from low-income neighborhoods, managing scholarships, and coordinating disaster-relief feeding operations. These initiatives directly support DCHC's mission by addressing food insecurity and creating job pathways. After receiving the award, she said it motivates her to expand scholarships and community workshops. She plans to recruit more young chefs, especially from underrepresented communities, to ensure the ACF reflects the people it serves.

Paula's dedication to professional excellence and humanitarian service epitomizes the values of both the ACF and DCHC. Congratulations, Paula.