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**ST. AUGUSTINE  
PONTE VEDRA**  
FLORIDA'S HISTORIC COAST®

## Local Chefs Recognized for Contributions to Growing Dining Scene

### *Culinary professionals make Florida's Historic Coast the place to be for elegant, fun food adventures*

St. Augustine, Fla. (August 7, 2023) – St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra, and The Beaches is known worldwide for charming history and expansive beaches. Thanks to the dedicated work of local culinary professionals, Florida's Historic Coast is becoming equally known for its vibrant food scene. The St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra, and The Beaches Visitors and Convention Bureau (VCB) created the 'Extraordinary Chefs of Florida's Historic Coast' program to recognize the work and dedication of local chefs, making this a gourmand's paradise.

"Florida's Historic Coast has become one of Florida's more popular visitor destinations," says Susan Phillips, President and CEO of St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra, and The Beaches Visitors and Convention Bureau. "And not just for our beaches, unique history, great golf, and beautiful nature. The exceptional dining scene has helped elevate Florida's Historic Coast as a world-class destination. There was a time when visitors' dining experience here was mostly fried shrimp and Menorcan Chowder. And still true to our culinary roots, that is an important part of the destination. However, in recent years, skilled professionals and chefs have built on the local culinary heritage and introduced new flavors and cooking techniques and flavors that accommodate the palate of sophisticated diners."

Honored chefs are those that have made their mark on the local culinary scene. The cuisines and atmospheres are varied, spanning the world of food and style. Florida's Historic Coast boasts some of the most unique fine dining experiences. *Ponte Vedra Inn & Club* showcases a high-end experience, complete with a Chef's Table Experience with wine pairings from their in-house sommelier. Peruvian cuisine has never been better than at *Llama Restaurant*. They feature a rotating seasonal menu that is grounded by hallmark dishes like the Pulpo, Anticuchos, and Patarashca. *Michael's* is a favorite of locals and visitors alike for its fresh spin on Spanish tapas, fusing traditional techniques with the finest local products. Fusion dishes like Shishito Peppers and Risotto are at home alongside favorites like Chuleta and Crab "Croquetas."

Casual dining reaches another level in St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra, and The Beaches. Don't be fooled by the laid-back beach vibe of *Village Garden Food Truck Park*. Between the hanging macrame chairs and palms are fantastic food trucks featuring various fairs, from fresh seafood to burgers. *The Floridian* embraces local Southern cuisine with an innovative flair, featuring dishes like Pickled Pepper Shrimps, Biscuits & Jelly, and N' Waffles. Tucked on *Meehan's Irish Pub & Seafood House's* second floor is an oyster bar serving the freshest oysters, raw and prepared with local ingredients, like the Datil Cornbread Oyster.

In 2021, the VCB kicked off a program recognizing the chefs and culinary professionals contributing to the elevated dining scene here. Some of the area's great chefs were recognized in a video to help raise awareness of Florida's Historic Coast quality dining options and culinary heritage. The chefs recognized in 2021 included Michael Lugo, Executive Chef and Owner of Michael's; Matt Brown, Chef, Owner and Partner at Lena and Urban Asado; Tyrone Bennet, founder of We Feed St. Augustine and owner of Heart & Soul Food Truck; Genie McNally, Chef and Owner of The Floridian Restaurant; and Joe Natoli, Executive Chef at Vernon's Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort & Spa. Due to the serious impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the restaurant and hospitality industry, the program was put on hold until this year.

With a rise in new, delicious restaurants entering the scene, it was the right time to reignite the chef recognition program. The St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra, and The Beaches VCB recently visited over 50 restaurants in St. Johns County to recognize chefs as 'Culinary Legends' of Florida's Historic Coast. Chefs were selected based on their overall reputation, team leadership, dedication to their craft, culinary innovation, and unwavering commitment to showcasing the region's finest flavors.

"Since honoring the inaugural class of chefs, the dining scene has elevated even more," beams Phillips. "The region has so many chefs who are rising to the top and deserve to be recognized. Many other chefs in the county are certainly worthy of recognition. The VCB will continue to recognize chefs for their hard work and dedication in years to come."

Each chef personally receives a certificate that reads: *The St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra, and The Beaches Visitors and Convention Bureau proclaims you as an Extraordinary Chef of Florida's Historic Coast. As such, we honor you with this recognition for your utmost dedication to your craft, your innovations, and your unwavering commitment to elevate the region as a world-class dining destination.*

This year's Extraordinary Chefs of Florida's Historic Coast are:

Frank Arguello, Cook and Owner, *Jim's Place*  
Jerry Asker, Chef, *Funkadelic Food Truck*  
Kris Baldwin, Chef, *Meehan's Irish Pub & Seafood House*  
Julio Banda, Chef, *Old City House Restaurant*  
Andrew Berg, Sous Chef, *Terra & Acqua*  
Laird Boles, Chef, *Ice Plant*  
Mike Brooks, Pit Master, *County Road Provisions*  
Corey Brown, Sous Chef, *Meehan's Irish Pub & Seafood House*  
Matt Brown, Chef, *Asado Life*  
Dakarian Calloway, Chef, *O.C. White's Restaurant*  
Chris Cantabene, Chef, *Raintree Restaurant*  
Lilibeth Carbonel, Chef, *Kusina Colorado*  
Nick Carrera, Asador, *Asado Life*  
Michael Cooney, Chef/Owner, *Ember and Iron*  
Melanie Cuartelon, Sous Chef, *Sawgrass Marriott Restaurants*  
Dustin Dailey, Chef, *The Elkhouse Eatery*  
Robert DeGrassi, Executive Chef, *Costa Brava at Casa Monica*  
Mark DeRusso, Chef and Owner, *La Strada Italian Restaurant*  
Dan Dobbs, Chef de Cuisine, *Gas Full Service Restaurant*

Christopher Evans, Chef, *Beachcomber Restaurant*  
Kevin Funk, Chef, *Café Alcazar*  
Brian Garner, Chef/Owner, *Seafood Kitchen of St. Augustine*  
Mo Gonzales, Chef, *Forgotten Tonic*  
Miguel Hernandez, Corporate Executive Chef, *Nona Blue*  
Travis Hickman, Chef, *Kusina Colorado*  
DeAnn Hobbs, Chef, *Villagio at Renaissance World Golf Resort*  
Chris Hohnke, Sous Chef, *Harvest & Reel at Embassy Suites Resort St. Augustine*  
Jake Hollander, Chef, *Aunt Kate's*  
Barry Honan, Chef, *Lotus Noodle Bar*  
Nicholas Hurley, Head Chef, *Salt Life Food Shack*  
Norberto Jaramillo, Executive Chef and Owner, *La Cocina International Restaurant*  
Steven Kellogg, Chef, *Beachcomber Restaurant*  
Connie Kingsmore, Chef de Cuisine, *Asado Life*  
Mathieu Landillon, Executive Chef, *Michael's/Pesca by Michael's*  
Aaron Legge, Chef, *Columbia Restaurant*  
Turner Leveck, Executive Chef, *Palm Valley Fish Camp*  
Ben Loose, Executive Chef, *Gas Full Service Restaurant*  
Michael Lugo, Executive Chef and Owner, *Michael's/Pesca by Michael's*  
Edgar Maldonado, Executive Chef, *Sawgrass Marriott Restaurants*  
River Masters, Executive Chef, *Blackfly The Restaurant*  
Genie McNally, Chef/Owner, *The Floridian*  
Dave Moyer, Executive Chef, *Gypsy Cab Co. Restaurant*  
Hermann Muller, Executive Chef, *Ponte Vedra Inn & Club*  
Natasha Olivera, Chef de Cuisine, *Michael's/Pesca by Michael's*  
Simone Parisi, Chef/Owner, *Terra & Acqua*  
Marshall Peters, Chef, *By Design Catering*  
Tasha Peters, Chef, *By Design Catering*  
Ned Pollack, Consultant and Guest Chef, *Gypsy Cab Co. Restaurant*  
Chris Proulx, Chef, *Avilés Restaurant & Lounge at Hilton Historic Bayfront*  
Nico Recore, *Marina Munch Food Truck Park*  
Chip Richards, Chef, *Cap's on the Water*  
Matthew Sanchez, Chef, *Sawgrass Marriott Restaurants*  
Alexander Sapp, Executive Chef, *The Bridge at St. Johns Golf & Country Club*  
Brendan Schreck, Owner, *Village Garden Food Truck Park*  
Melissa Schroeder, Chef/Owner, *Ancient City Brunch Bar*  
Ellie Schultze, Chef, *Vilano Main Street Diner*  
Charles Searleman, Chef/Owner, *The Elkhouse Eatery*  
Sebastian Sikora, Chef de Cuisine, *La Cocina International Restaurant*  
Joshua Smith, Chef, *Catch 27*  
Sherry Stoppelbein, Chef/Owner, *Luvin Oven and Luvin O'Van*  
Mike Thomashunis, Executive Chef, *Aqua Grill*  
Freddy Underhill, Executive Chef/Owner, *Amici Italian Restaurant*  
Marcel Vizcarra, Chef/Owner, *Llama Restaurant*  
Matt Voskuil, Executive Chef, *TPC Sawgrass Clubhouse*  
Troy White, Executive Chef, *Valley Smoke*  
John Whitworth, Head Chef, *St. Augustine Seafood Company*

With such an extensive list of fine chefs and culinary professionals, there's never been a better time to plan a trip to Florida's Historic Coast. There's no shortage of gourmet adventures to be had!

[Click here for chef images!](#) Access code is: chefs

Located midway between Daytona Beach and Jacksonville, Florida's Historic Coast includes historic St. Augustine, the outstanding golf and seaside elegance of Ponte Vedra Beach, and 42 miles of pristine Atlantic beaches. For more information, call 1.800.653.2489 or go to the Visitors and Convention Bureau website at [www.FloridasHistoricCoast.com](http://www.FloridasHistoricCoast.com). Check us out on social media Instagram [@FloridasHistoricCoast](#), [@ViajaStAugustine](#), [Facebook.com/OfficialStAugustine](https://www.facebook.com/OfficialStAugustine) and [Facebook.com/ViajaStAugustine](https://www.facebook.com/ViajaStAugustine) and Twitter [@FIHistoricCoast](#)

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