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Colorado Restaurant Association Announces New Awards and Gala, Honoring 34 Statewide Finalists and 4 Honorees FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – September 30, 2024

Denver, CO – **The Colorado Restaurant Association (CRA)** is pleased to introduce its new annual industry awards and gala event: [The Colorado Restaurant Association Hospitality Awards \(HOSPYS\)](#).

The HOSPYS will continue in the tradition of the CRA’s historic Industry Spotlight Awards, celebrating the exceptional talent and accomplishments of Colorado’s restaurant and hospitality community, while introducing new awards categories, public voting for finalists, and a gala on **Wednesday, November 6, 2024 at the Seawell Ballroom at the Denver Performing Arts Complex** (1350 Arapahoe Street, Denver, CO 80204) in downtown Denver, starting at 6 p.m. James Beard Foundation Award-winning author and speaker **Adrian Miller** will emcee the awards ceremony at the gala.

The HOSPYS are the only awards program for Colorado’s hospitality community that celebrates contributions at all levels of the industry, from back-of-house and front-of-house employees and managers to food trucks, restaurant chefs, and operators. Awards are also given to honor individuals and partners who serve as outstanding mentors and allies for the industry.

During the 2024 HOSPYS Gala, the CRA will honor hospitality professionals and businesses across 13 award categories; winners will be revealed live in 10 categories that are open for public voting until Thursday, October 24, 2024.

The 2024 HOSPYS Award categories and finalists are:

- Front-of-House Employee of the Year: **Jenne Harris, Maître d’, Stone Cellar Bistro** (Arvada); **Keith Yoder, Beer-Wall Ambassador, The Golden Mill** (Golden)
- Back-of-House Employee of the Year: **Francisco Contreras, Dishwasher/Prep Cook, Pindustry** (Greenwood Village); **Brandon Shirley, Line Cook, Rupert’s Durango** (Durango); **Ricardo Tyrell, Line Cook, Salt & Lime** (Steamboat Springs)
- Bartender of the Year: **Celeste Rangel Ruiz, Middleman** (Denver); **Coleman Sisk, Yacht Club, OK Yeah, Bread Bar, and others** (Denver, Silver Plume); **Keith Webber, Mountain Standard** (Vail)
- Manager of the Year: **Angelina Allen, Assistant General Manager, 626 on Rood** (Grand Junction); **Jessica Cram, General Manager, City, O’City** (Denver); **Irving Mares, General Manager, Santo** (Boulder); **Jason Sutton, Director of Operations, Footers Catering** (Arvada)
- Food Truck of the Year: **Chiri’s Momo Delight** (Boulder); **Mukja** (Denver); **Pali Thai** (Palisade)
- Operator of the Year: **Brent Jackson & Dan Smalheiser, Little and Avery Eatery** (Fort Collins); **Chris Schmidt, Craftman Brewing Co., Bird Craft, and Il Mago** (Edwards, Frisco); **Alena Windedehl-Simms & Manny Sena, A&M Creations on Main** (Delta)

- Newcomer Restaurant of the Year: **Alma Fonda Fina** (Denver); **Marigold** (Lyons); **Sắp Sủ** (Denver)
- Pastry Chef/Baker of the Year: **Hannah Lavoy, Lucina Eatery & Bar and Xiquita Restaurante y Bar** (Denver); **Thoa Nguyen, Banh & Butter Bakery Café** (Aurora); **Carolyn Nugent and Alen Ramos, Poulette Bakeshop** (Parker)
- Chef of the Year: **Eric Brenner, Red Gravy** (Colorado Springs); **Ian Palazzola, Frasca Food and Wine** (Boulder); **Bo Porytko, Molotov Kitschen & Cocktails and Misfit Snackbar** (Denver); **Kenneth Wan, MAKFam** (Denver); **Penelope Wong, Yuan Wonton** (Denver)
- Restaurant of the Year: **Annette** (Aurora); **Bin 707** (Grand Junction); **Lucina Eatery & Bar** (Denver); **Restaurant Olivia** (Denver); **Rootstalk** (Breckenridge)

Three additional HOSPY Awards will be given to the Legacy Employee of the Year, the Community Partner of the Year, and the Philanthropist of the Year. The Richard P. Ayers Distinguished Service Award will also be presented during the HOSPY Awards Gala. Those awardees are:

- Legacy Employee of the Year: **Miranda McFarlan-Garcia**, Colorado GM, **Richard Sandoval Hospitality** (Denver, Snowmass)
- Community Partner of the Year: **US Foods** (Centennial)
- Philanthropist of the Year: **Richard and Jessica Fierro, Atrevida Beer Co.** (Colorado Springs)
- Richard P. Ayers Distinguished Service Award: **Catherine Cooney, Cooney Consulting and Recruiting** (Denver)

“Colorado’s culinary scene is earning lots of national attention, as well it should, and the CRA is happy to add to the chorus, shining a local light on the hard-working, talented professionals and impactful businesses that make our communities feel like home,” says Sonia Riggs, CRA President and CEO. “The HOSPY Awards are meant to elevate and celebrate our community, which represents more than 10% of Colorado’s workforce and is a key driver of the state’s economy.”

Members of the public submitted online nominations beginning in July, and last week, a nominating committee made up of statewide media and industry professionals selected finalists and awardees. The public can vote for the 10 finalist categories listed above until October 24; their votes and the nominating committee will determine the winners, who will be revealed live at the 2024 HOSPY Awards Gala. For voting and gala tickets, go to corerestaurant.org/co-hospy-awards.

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About the Colorado Restaurant Association

The Colorado Restaurant Association (CRA) is dedicated to the enhancement and success of Colorado’s foodservice industry. Founded in 1933, the CRA is the leading trade organization for the state’s dynamic restaurant scene. The CRA represents, educates, and promotes an \$18+ billion industry comprised of more than 13,000 eating and drinking establishments and more than 303,000 workers, representing 11% of the state’s workforce.