



NEWS RELEASE

US Foods Announces National Winners Of First Food Fanatics Awards Program; Public Can Vote For The Ultimate Food Fanatic

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Today, US Foods, Inc. announced the winners of its first ever Food Fanatics Awards program. The winners of each of the six categories were selected from nearly 1,000 entries received from across the country.

"We always knew that the foodservice industry has some of the most talented, dedicated individuals, and the stories from the Food Fanatics Awards entries gave us 1,000 more reasons why it's a community of passionate people who do outstanding work every day," said Steve Guberman, Chief Merchandising Officer, US Foods. "We created the Food Fanatics Awards program to celebrate those who are doing something unique in our industry or have overcome significant personal and professional obstacles to realize great success."

The Food Fanatics Awards feature six creative categories designed to represent the heart and soul of the \$709 billion restaurant industry. The categories include: Best Bite, Culinary Genius, Big Heart, Hero, Epic Turnaround, and Top Crew.

The Category Winners are:

- **Best Bite:** Ken Tominaga, PABU, San Francisco
- **Culinary Genius:** Manuel Verney, Manuel's Bread Café, North Augusta, S.C.
- **Big Heart:** ZPizza, Newport Beach, Calif.
- **Hero:** Robert Vick, Vick's Vittles Country Kitchen, Albuquerque, N.M.
- **Epic Turnaround:** Alex Pozantidis, Zoe Restaurant, East Amherst, N.Y.
- **Top Crew:** Willy Carroll and team, Tahoe Mountain Club, Truckee, Calif.

Each of the national Category Finalists will receive a trip to Napa Valley, Calif. to attend the ReThink Food event at the CIA's Greystone campus, along with a \$5,000 credit for US Foods Culinary Equipment and Supplies for a pantry or kitchen makeover.

Toni Sakaguchi, CEC, CHE, executive chef of the Strategic Initiatives Group at The Culinary Institute of America (CIA) at Greystone; Sue Zelickson, Minnesota foodie, columnist, radio host, entrepreneur, and community volunteer; and Thomas J. Macrina CEC, CCA, DFS, AAC, president, American Culinary Federation and a US Foods Food Fanatics Chef were part of the panel of judges who reviewed the entries. Criteria for evaluation included food fanaticism, creativity and positive participation in the foodservice and/or restaurant industry. The group selected the six Category Winners for their accomplishments, dedication and passion.

VOTE TO DETERMINE WINNER OF THE ULTIMATE FOOD FANATICS AWARD

Now that the national category winners have been announced, it's up to the public to determine who among the six winners will receive the Ultimate Food Fanatics Award and grand prize. Voting is open today through October 30 at [FoodFanatics.com/Awards](https://www.foodfanatics.com/Awards).

The Ultimate Food Fanatics Award winner will be announced on Friday, November 6 at the Culinary Institute of America's ReThink Food event. The winner will receive an additional \$5,000 prize credit.

All winners will be highlighted in an upcoming issue of Food Fanatics magazine.

ABOUT THE CATEGORY WINNERS

- **Best Bite: Chef Ken Tominaga, PABU, San Francisco**

Every chef has wondered whether creating the perfect bite can be achieved. For San Francisco Chef Ken Tominaga, the “Happy Spoon” at PABU proves that it does exist. A delicate balance of raw oyster, uni, ikura, and tobiko mingle with a light ponzu creme fraiche, offering the ultimate tasting of the sea in one spoonful.

- **Culinary Genius: Manuel Verney, Manuel’s Bread Café, North Augusta, S.C.**

Chef Manuel Verney has recreated the essence of his birthplace, Lyon, France, at Manuel’s Bread Cafe in North Augusta, S.C. But Verney is so much more than a chef and owner—he’s also a farmer, baker, and entrepreneur. The French-inspired menu features produce from his farm across the street, while the bakery produces bread, custom cakes, and croissants for his diners, other restaurants and retailers. His passion for the business also launched a bottled sauce that originated from the restaurant called “The Furious Frenchman.”

- **Big Heart: ZPizza, Newport Beach, Calif.**

Zpizza is proving that a kid’s favorite food can make the school playground a kinder, gentler place. The artisan pizza chain recently launched Nice zSlice in recognition of October’s National Bullying Prevention month. Teachers from more than 200 schools nationwide partnered with local Zpizza restaurants, rewarding student kindness with a complimentary slice of pizza. Zpizza also hosted pizza parties and provided materials for the educators.

- **Hero: Robert Vick, Vick’s Vittles Country Kitchen, Albuquerque, N.M.**

Robert Vick has been legally blind for 30 years, but that hasn’t stopped him from bettering his community through foodservice. After starting a blind feeder program for the Los Alamos Labs, he opened Vick’s Vittles. Despite three robberies and an assault that left him with 27 stitches and 12 staples in his head, Vick has never given up on his dedication to the business or the community; it just made him work harder. He bought a downtrodden hotel next

door to expand his restaurant, and uses food as a way to work with charities, military and service organizations.

- **Epic Turnaround: Alex Pozantidis, Zoe Restaurant, East Amherst, N.Y.**

Pozantidis opened his first successful restaurant in 2006 with his two brothers before deciding to branch out on his own. Starting out was hard—Pozantidis lost his first restaurant to a devastating fire and a second to the recession. Never one to throw in the towel, he has since re-opened his third restaurant, Zoe.

- **Top Crew: Willy Carroll and team, Tahoe Mountain Club, Truckee, Calif.**

Chef Willy Carroll and his team at Tahoe Mountain Club split time between two golf course restaurants each summer and two restaurants at NorthStar Ski Resort each winter. The crew has no room for error thanks to the resort rules, such as transporting ingredients by snowmobile before dawn since they don't have access to the ski lifts. And the team is not allowed to stay late to prep since all personnel must be off of the mountain by 5 p.m. These kinds of parameters can be challenging, but a top crew like Carroll's gets the job done.

For more information about the Food Fanatics Awards and the winners, visit: foodfanatics.com/awards.

To learn more about US Foods and its Food Fanatics, visit www.usfoods.com or www.foodfanatics.com. You can also like us on **Facebook**, follow us on **Twitter** and watch our chefs in action on **YouTube**.

ABOUT US FOODS

US Foods, Inc. is a large foodservice distributor serving chefs and foodservice operators across the country. Its customers include independent and multi-unit restaurants, healthcare and hospitality entities, government and educational institutions. The company employs approximately 25,000 people in 61 locations nationwide. US Foods is headquartered in Rosemont, Ill.

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