



NEWS RELEASE

US Foods Names Zpizza Ultimate Food Fanatic Award Winner For Nice Zslice Anti-Bullying Program

2015-11-09

Proving a kid's favorite food can make the school playground a kinder, gentler place, US Foods recognized zpizza as the first Ultimate Food Fanatic Award winner for the restaurant's innovative Nice zSlice anti-bullying program. The top award was announced at reThink Food®, a conference co-presented by The Culinary Institute of America and the MIT Media Lab at the CIA's Greystone campus in Napa Valley over the weekend.

"Being a Food Fanatic is so much more than having a love of food, it's about having passion and drive to do something greater for the industry and our communities," said Marshall Warkentin, SVP, Marketing, US Foods. "The way zpizza is tackling a big issue like bullying shows they not only have a Big Heart, but deserve the Ultimate Food Fanatic Award and the public clearly agrees."

The Food Fanatics Awards program, designed to shine the spotlight on the heart and soul of the food and restaurant industry, received nearly 1,000 entries. These inspiring stories were then narrowed by regions among six creative categories: Best Bite, Culinary Genius, Hero, Epic Turnaround, Top Crew, and Big Heart. From there, an esteemed panel of judges chose the Category Winners and the public then voted online to select the one Ultimate Food Fanatic Award winner. zpizza prevailed as the Food Fanatics Awards Big Heart winner.

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 pizza restaurants, rewarding student kindness with a complimentary slice of pizza. pizza also hosted pizza parties and provided materials for the educators.

As the Ultimate Food Fanatic Award winner, pizza will receive a \$10,000 credit for US Foods Culinary Equipment and Supplies for a pantry or kitchen makeover. Other Food Fanatics Awards Category Winners recognized at The Culinary Institute of America reThink Food conference, include:

- **Food Fanatics Best Bite Award Winner Chef Ken Tominaga of PABU in San Francisco.** His “Happy Spoon” is a delicate balance of raw oyster, uni, ikura, and tobiko mingle with a light ponzu creme fraiche. Chef Tominaga served his “Happy Spoon” at the reThink Conference where he was joined by his son, also a student at The Culinary Institute of America.
- **Food Fanatics Hero Award Winner Robert Vick of Vick’s Vittles in Albuquerque, N. M.** Even though Vick has been legally blind for 30 years, it hasn’t stopped him from using food as a way to work with charities, military and service organizations. 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.
- **Food Fanatics Culinary Genius Award Winner Chef Manuel Verney-Carron of Manuel’s Bread Café in North Augusta, S.C.** Chef Verney-Carron has recreated the essence of his birthplace, Lyon, France, in his local restaurant. But Verney is so much more than a chef and owner—he’s also a farmer, baker, and entrepreneur. His passion for the business also launched a bottled sauce that originated from the restaurant called “The Furious Frenchman.”
- **Food Fanatics Epic Turnaround Award Winner Alex Pozantidis of 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.
- **Food Fanatics Top Crew Award Winner Willy Carroll and team of 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.

"The Food Fanatics Awards program generated impressive entries that reinforce the dedication it takes to succeed in the industry, said Toni Sakaguchi, CEC, CHE, executive chef of the Strategic Initiatives Group at The Culinary Institute of America, who served as a judge. "It's a privilege to be involved in such a great program that features outstanding food people across the country."

The judging panel also included 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.

The Ultimate Food Fanatic Award winner and all of the Food Fanatics Category Winners will be highlighted in an upcoming issue of Food Fanatics magazine.

"We know any successful food business starts with passionate people," said Warkentin. "All of us at US Foods congratulate the Winners and Finalists who are truly Food Fanatics – some of the most dedicated, creative and skilled professionals in the industry."

For more information about the Food Fanatics Awards and the winners, visit: [foodfanatics.com/awards](https://www.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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