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SUNSHINE PLATE COMPETITION STAGE TO DEBUT AT THE 2026 FLORIDA RESTAURANT SHOW IN ORLANDO

Delivering a concentrated audience of engaged culinary professionals -- competitors and spectators -- through high-impact, live competition programming

ORLANDO, FL, April 29, 2026 – [The Florida Restaurant Show](#) is turning up the heat with the debut of the Sunshine Plate Competition Stage, sponsored by UNOX Combi Ovens. This all-new, high-energy culinary experience is set to take center stage at the 2026 event, taking place October 25–27 at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, Florida.

Presented in partnership with the American Culinary Federation Central Florida Chapter, the Sunshine Plate Competition Stage will take place over three action-packed days, featuring head-to-head chef battles. As the official arena for the 2026 ACF Culinary Arts Competition, this can't miss feature celebrates the passion and talent of the profession. Attendees can expect a lively atmosphere filled with bold flavors, creative presentations, and interactive moments that bring them closer to the action.



Designed to deliver both competition and entertainment, the stage will feature four fully equipped cooking stations where chefs will go head-to-head in live culinary battles. With stadium-style seating and surrounding bleachers, attendees will enjoy an immersive, front-row experience as the action unfolds in a dynamic and engaging setting. The ability to watch culinary techniques in real time, discover new ingredient applications, and gain

inspiration elevates the attendee experience to a new level.

“Our goal with the Sunshine Plate Competition Stage is to create an unforgettable experience that blends culinary excellence with live entertainment,” said Glenn Celentano, Partner and CEO of Restaurant Events. “By partnering with the ACF Central Florida Chapter, we are elevating the level of competition and providing chefs with a prestigious platform to showcase their skills, while reinforcing the Florida Restaurant Show’s commitment to professional excellence, innovation and meaningful industry connections. This new feature is poised to become a centerpiece attraction for the 2026 event.”

UNOX will be the official combi oven sponsor for the competition stage. For sponsors and exhibitors, the competition provides a powerful platform for product storytelling, brand visibility and authentic engagement with decision-makers – placing products directly into the hands of chefs and into the spotlight of live competition. For more information on ways to get involved, contact Paul Pedrow, VP of Sales, at paul@therestaurantevents.com.

The Sunshine Plate Competition Stage will highlight a range of disciplines across both student and professional levels, including:

- **Pastry Sculpture Competitions (Student and Professional)** – Sunday, October 25
- **Pork Challenge (Professional Hot Food Competition)** – Sunday, October 25
- **Seafood Challenge (Professional Hot Food Competition)** – Monday, October 26
- **Beef Challenge (Professional Hot Food Competition)** – Tuesday, October 27

Competitors will be judged by a panel of esteemed culinary professionals, led by Reimund Pitz, CEC, CCE, AAC, HOF, with additional judges to be announced. Participants will compete for ACF Gold, Silver, and Bronze medals based on scoring, along with event trophies and cash prizes awarded to the top three finishers in each category. Open to both ACF members and non-members, the competition invites chefs and culinary students to demonstrate their creativity, precision, and technical expertise. To register to receive additional information, [click here](#).

“The Florida Restaurant Show has long been an exceptional host for our culinary arts competitions, providing an environment that challenges, inspires, and elevates both students and professionals. We are proud of our nearly 30-year partnership and the lasting impact it has had on culinary education and career development,” said Jason Fridrich, Ed.D., MBA, CEC, CCE, CE, American Culinary Federation Central Florida Chapter President. “The debut of the Sunshine Plate Competition Stage is an exciting evolution that brings even greater visibility and energy to the culinary arts. We look forward to continuing this collaboration for many years to come.”

In addition to the ACF competitions, chefs from across the region will participate in timed challenges judged by industry experts and celebrated culinary professionals. The 2026 Florida Restaurant Show will bring together thousands of restaurant and foodservice professionals for three days of networking, education, and discovery of the latest trends, products, and solutions shaping the industry. For more information and updates, visit www.floridarestaurantshow.com.

The [Florida Restaurant Show](#) will run alongside [The Pizza Tomorrow Summit](#) October 25-27, 2026 at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, FL. Both events are owned by [Restaurant Events, LLC](#), a trade show management company in the restaurant and foodservice industries, which also produces the [California Restaurant Show](#) and [Pizza Tomorrow Summit Pavilion](#) taking place August 23-25 at the Anaheim Convention Center and the [New York Restaurant Show](#) and [Pizza Tomorrow Summit Pavilion](#) taking place March 7-9, 2027 at the Javits Center in New York City.

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