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PIZZA TOMORROW SUMMIT AND FLORIDA RESTAURANT SHOW CELEBRATE MILESTONE ANNIVERSARIES WITH INCREASED BUYER ATTENDANCE, INDUSTRY INNOVATION AND CULINARY COMPETITIONS

Three-day Orlando events report 8% increase in buyers and feature nearly 300 exhibitors, 40+ hours of education, live demonstrations and culinary competitions

ORLANDO, FL – November 5, 2026 – The Pizza Tomorrow Summit and Florida Restaurant Show concluded three successful days of industry education, product innovation, networking and culinary competitions, October 25–27, at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, reporting an 8% increase in buyer attendance.

Celebrating the 5th anniversary of the Pizza Tomorrow Summit and 55th anniversary of the Florida Restaurant Show, the co-located events brought together thousands of restaurant owners, pizzeria operators, chefs, foodservice professionals and industry suppliers to discover the latest products, technologies and strategies shaping the future of hospitality. The milestone celebrations also included a $5,000 giveaway to attendees.



The expansive exhibit hall featured nearly 300 exhibitors where attendees had opportunities to sample products, experience live demonstrations, connect with suppliers and discover practical solutions to improve operations, control costs and increase profitability. Exhibitors included Gordon Food Service, Back of House, PizzaMaster, Horizon Food Brokers, Keg Kraft Beverage Company, Galbani, Florida Dairy Farmers, Stirling Food Systems, Specialty Butter and OGGI Foods, among hundreds of companies serving the restaurant, pizza and foodservice industries.

"These events are designed to help restaurant and pizza operators discover new ideas, build valuable relationships and find solutions they can immediately put to work in their businesses," said Glenn Celentano, Partner and CEO of Restaurant Events, LLC, producer of the events. "The 8% increase in buyer attendance reflects the continued demand for opportunities to connect, learn and explore new products. From the energy of our culinary competitions to the meaningful conversations taking place throughout the exhibit hall and education sessions, this year's events demonstrated the innovation, creativity and resilience of our industry. Celebrating these milestone anniversaries made the experience even more special."

A major highlight of the Florida Restaurant Show was the debut of the Sunshine Plate Challenge Arena, presented in partnership with the American Culinary Federation (ACF) Central Florida Chapter.

More than 20 professional chefs competed in ACF-sanctioned culinary challenges showcasing technical skill, creativity and culinary excellence.



The three-day competition program featured a pastry sculpture competition, along with professional pork, seafood and beef challenges. The arena also hosted the Hospitality School Showdown, bringing together educators from four Florida hospitality education programs for a spirited culinary competition. 2026 ACF Culinary Competition Winners:

- **ACF Pastry Sculpture Competition**: Bronze Medal Score & People's Choice Award – Nisa York
- **ACF Professional Pork Challenge**: Silver Medal Score – Mia Smith
- **ACF Professional Seafood Challenge**: Gold Medal Score – Alessandro Coppa
- **ACF Professional Beef Challenge**: Certificate level reached for all competitors
- **Hospitality School Showdown**: Johnson and Wales University Alumnus Chef Brook-Lynn

The Sunshine Plate Challenge Arena was sponsored by UNOX Ovens, Gordon Food Service, Bar Harbor Seafood, Exhibition Provisions Gin, Yukan Pizza, Pizzacini, and Florida Citrus.

The Pizza Tomorrow Summit marked its fifth anniversary with an exciting combination of education, product innovation, live demonstrations and competitive pizza making.

A centerpiece of the event was the **2026 Galbani Professionale Pizza Cup**, hosted by the U.S. Pizza Team and Galbani Professionale U.S. The competition brought together talented pizzaioli and pizza acrobats to showcase their creativity, technical skills and passion for the craft.



Competitors participated in culinary categories including Pizza in the Pan, On the Menu, Pizza for Two and Backyard Pizza Oven, along with pizza acrobatics challenges featuring freestyle performances, dough stretching, speed pizza making and box folding. Grand-prize opportunities included trips to compete at the World Pizza Championships in Parma, Italy.

2026 Galbani Professionale Pizza Cup Winners:

- **Pizza in the Pan – Grand Prize: Trip to Italy:** Mike Pitera, Pizza A Modo Mio SC
- **On the Menu:** Antonio Aguila, Uncle Rico's Pizza
- **Pizza for Two:** Enrico Aguila & Johnny Budd, Uncle Rico's Pizza
- **Backyard Pizza Oven:** Robert Butler, Lina's Pizza
- **Freestyle Acrobatics – Grand Prize: Trip to Italy:** Michael Testa, Jersey Pizza Boys
- **Largest Dough Stretch:** John McCaffrey
- **Fastest Pizza Maker:** Patt Miller, Pizza Patt's
- **Fastest Box Folder:** David Whisker

The Summit also announced Peter P. Lachapelle as its new Director of Business & Brand Development, joining the Restaurant Events team. With more than 40 years of experience in the pizza industry, Lachapelle brings extensive expertise in developing influential trade shows, media brands and educational programs. His appointment reflects Restaurant Events' continued investment in expanding the Pizza Tomorrow Summit and strengthening its connections throughout the pizza industry.

Beyond the competitions, the events featured more than 40 hours of educational programming addressing the challenges and opportunities facing today's restaurant and pizza operators.
Industry experts shared actionable strategies on restaurant profitability, food costs, workforce management, artificial intelligence, marketing, customer engagement, leadership and operational efficiency.

Another highlight was a live recording of the *So You Want to Run a Restaurant* podcast featuring Rick Rosenfield, co-founder of California Pizza Kitchen, who shared insights from his entrepreneurial journey and discussed his book, *The California Pizza Kitchen Story*.



The Florida Restaurant Show and Pizza Tomorrow Summit will return to the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, **November 7–9, 2027**, continuing their commitment to connecting restaurant and pizza professionals with the products, education and industry relationships that support business success. For more information, visit www.floridarestaurantshow.com and www.pizzatomorrow.com.

Restaurant Events, LLC produces the Florida Restaurant Show and Pizza Tomorrow Summit in partnership with the Florida Restaurant Association. The company also produces the New York Restaurant Show, taking place March 7–9, 2027, at the Javits Center in New York City; the inaugural Carolinas Restaurant Show, launching June 16–17, 2027, in Charlotte, North Carolina; and the California Restaurant Show, scheduled for September 12–14, 2027, at the Anaheim Convention Center.

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