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**CALIFORNIA RESTAURANT SHOW WRAPS SUCCESSFUL 2026 EVENT IN ANAHEIM WITH MORE THAN 7,000 INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS AND 6% GROWTH IN BUYERS**

*Three-day event featured 270+ exhibit booths, 110+ new exhibitors, 60+ hours of education, culinary demonstrations, competitions and the Pizza Tomorrow Summit Pavilion*

**ANAHEIM, CA – August 31, 2026** – The 2026 [California Restaurant Show](#) concluded a successful three-day run last week at the Anaheim Convention Center, bringing together 7,000 restaurant, foodservice and hospitality industry professionals for three days of innovation, education, culinary experiences, competitions and networking. More than 88% of attendees were decision-makers from leading brands such as 33 Taps, Disney, Jollibee Foods Corp., Taco Nazo, Tony Romas, Wahlburgers, Baja Fresh Mexican Grill, The Cheesecake Factory, and Wildbird.

Held August 23–25, the expanded Show featured 34,000 sq. ft. of exhibit booths, including 110+ new exhibitors, and a show floor 4,000 square feet larger than last year, reflecting continued growth and momentum across California's restaurant and hospitality industry. Attendees included independent operators as well as representatives from nationally recognized restaurants, foodservice and hospitality brands.



"The energy throughout the Show demonstrated just how dynamic and innovative California's restaurant industry continues to be," said Glenn Celentano, Partner & CEO of Restaurant Events, LLC, producer of the California Restaurant Show. "It was exciting to see the show continue its resurgence, and the energy was palpable. With an expanded show floor and so many new exhibitors joining us this year, the event provided

tremendous opportunities for operators to discover new products, hear from industry leaders, connect with colleagues and leave with ideas they can immediately put to work in their businesses."

Shawn Walchef, Owner / Founder - Cali BBQ / Cali BBQ Media said, "Getting outside of my restaurant is the most important thing I've heard how to do. The California Restaurant Show did a phenomenal job creating space for operators, technology partners, and hospitality leaders to learn from one another."

A highlight of the event was an appearance by acclaimed restaurateur, author and Food Network host Tyler Florence, who took the Culinary Innovation Theater stage for a fireside chat followed by a live Steak Frites demonstration with Chef Ryan Hacker. Florence also signed copies of his cookbook, *American Grill*, for attendees.

The Culinary Innovation Theater offered live demonstrations, tastings and culinary experiences throughout the three-day event. Featured culinary talent included Chef Nelson German, showcasing Dominican flavors and offering attendees tastings; Chef Ben Diaz, presenting a live yellowfin tuna carving demonstration; acclaimed pastry chef Sherry Yard and Chef Sherief Shawky, demonstrating how combi oven technology can enhance culinary performance; and Chef Shawn Osbey, bringing global flavors and culinary storytelling to the stage.

Chef Yard and Shawky also judged the *Rapid Fire: Future Kitchen Performance Competition powered by UNOX*, awarding the \$1,000 grand prize to Chef Ismael Torres of Rough Chop LLC.

Attendees also had access to more than 60 hours of education focused on the issues impacting restaurant businesses today. Sessions addressed profitability and food costs, workforce and labor, artificial intelligence and restaurant technology, marketing, California regulations, food safety, menu innovation, catering, leadership and operational efficiency.

Education highlights included programming developed in partnership with the California Restaurant Association, including sessions addressing important legal and legislative issues impacting California operators, as well as discussions on restaurant profitability, hospitality trends, artificial intelligence, food costs and strategies for operating more efficient and successful businesses.

The Show also provided an expanded marketplace for attendees to discover hundreds of new products and solutions. With 275 companies exhibiting at the show, the exhibit hall showcased food and beverage products, equipment, technology, services and other innovations designed to help operators improve efficiency, address labor challenges, respond to changing consumer preferences and increase profitability.

The Pizza Tomorrow Summit Pavilion returned to the Show floor, offering pizzeria operators a dedicated destination to discover pizza-focused products, equipment, ingredients and business solutions. The pavilion also featured the California Pizza Challenge, sponsored by Real California Milk, bringing pizza makers together to showcase their skills and creativity in live competition. 1<sup>st</sup> place winners in each of the competitions were:

- **Pizza in the Pan Challenge Winner:** Rocco Labbate owner and operator of Tievoli Pizza Bar in Palatine, IL
- **Real 3-Cheese Challenge Winner:** David Solum, Pizza Chef, Logan & Woodward, Watertown, SD
- **Gluten-Free Competition Winner:** Sean Dempsey, Owner, Dempsey's Brewer Pub & Restaurant in Watertown, SD
- **Non-Traditional Official Winner:** Boris Berard, French Pizza Maker, ORA 1929 Atelier Pizza in Nice, France

Programming throughout the event was supported by leading industry organizations, including the California Restaurant Association and Latino Restaurant Association, further expanding opportunities for attendees to connect with industry experts and access resources tailored to California restaurant operators.

The growth of the 2026 event builds on the momentum of the California Restaurant Show, which Trade Show Executive recently recognized as one of the Fastest 50 Growing Trade Shows in the United States.

Restaurant Events, LLC produces the California Restaurant Show, held in partnership with the California Restaurant Association. The 2027 event will be held September 12-14 back at the Anaheim Convention Center. For more information, visit the [California Restaurant Show](#) website.

Restaurant Events, LLC, also produces the [Florida Restaurant Show](#) and [Pizza Tomorrow Summit](#), taking place October 25–27, 2026, at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, Florida; the [New York Restaurant Show](#), taking place March 7–9, 2027, at the Javits Center in New York City; and the new [Carolinas Restaurant Show](#), launching June 16–17, 2027, in Charlotte, North Carolina.