



# South Carolina DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Hugh E. Weathers, Commissioner

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**



## **Chef Ambassadors to Return for 2021**

**COLUMBIA, S.C. (January 12, 2021)** – The 2020 class of South Carolina Chef Ambassadors will serve a second year, extending their service through the end of 2021.

The decision by Gov. Henry McMaster, the South Carolina Department of Agriculture (SCDA) and the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism (SCPRT) allows the 2020 chefs to serve a more complete term, given that many special events have been cancelled during the COVID-19 pandemic. Inviting these four outstanding chefs to continue their service also addresses concerns about evaluating new nominees during a time when the hospitality industry is facing unprecedented challenges.

The South Carolina Chef Ambassador program was established in 2014 to promote South Carolina as a top culinary destination, highlighting the state's talented chefs, creative recipes, authentic cuisines, locally grown produce and unique products.

“Our Chef Ambassadors help us learn about our culinary heritage and promote Certified South Carolina,” said Commissioner of Agriculture Hugh Weathers. “Now more than ever, it’s crucial that South Carolinians and visitors support the state’s chefs – and the local farmers they rely on.”



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“The Chef Ambassadors program has helped us promote South Carolina as a must-visit culinary destination with authentic cuisine, locally grown products and distinctive tastes,” said Duane Parrish, SCPRT Director. “We plan to deliver the same appeal in 2021 when the program resumes.”

The four chefs selected last year represent diverse culinary backgrounds and regions of the state. During 2020, they represented the state at the Charleston Wine + Food festival, Upstate food festival Euphoria and the South Carolina Congressional Cup. However, many other appearances have been limited or cancelled.

South Carolina’s Chef Ambassadors are:

**Chef Kevin Mitchell (Chef Instructor)**  
**Culinary Institute of Charleston | Charleston, SC**

Chef Kevin Mitchell’s culinary work embraces traditional American flavors, sumptuous soul food flair and delicate French cuisine. This broad mastery of global and regional techniques earned him the Grumpy Gourmet’s title of “Super Chef.” Chef Mitchell began his training as a young boy in his grandmother’s kitchen, where he first paid his dues by picking greens – cleaning collard greens, kale and spinach. This experience laid the foundation for his dedication to moving food from the fresh market to a white tablecloth, and he’s steadily climbed up the culinary ranks ever since. His book “Taste the State: South Carolina’s Signature Foods, Recipes, and Their Stories,” co-authored with David S. Shields, will be released this year.

**Chef Raffaele Dall’Erta (Executive Chef)**  
**Hamptons | Sumter, SC**

Born and raised in Milan, Chef Raffaele Dall’Erta was introduced to cooking at a very young age. His father’s love of food and skill in the kitchen was a great influence on his youth, as were early foraging trips with his grandmother where the only rule was not to come home empty-handed. Chef Dall’Erta attended culinary school at Vallesana in Northern Lombardy and took on apprenticeships which led to positions in top Italian kitchens including Don Lisander and La Rondine. He has spent time in world-renowned restaurants such as The Fat Duck in the United Kingdom and Per Se in New York. After 11 years as the Sous Chef at the renowned Inn at Little Washington, Dall’Erta joined the team at Hamptons.

**Chef Jason Tufts (Executive Chef)**  
**Malia’s | Aiken, SC**

Chef Jason Tufts has served as the Executive Chef at Malia’s in downtown Aiken since 2017. Prior to that, he served as Executive Chef at the Doctors Hospital of Augusta, the Green Boundary and Woodside Plantation Country Club. He graduated from Johnson and Wales University in Charleston, SC in 1999. Jason is a big proponent of using local products and was nominated by the founder of the Chef Ambassador program, Brandon Velie, of Juniper restaurant in Ridge Spring, SC.



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### **Chef Jamie Daskalis (Executive Chef)**

#### **Johnny D's Waffles and Benedicts | Myrtle Beach, SC**

A graduate of the Culinary Institute of America with a degree in Baking & Pastry, Chef Jamie Daskalis is a 20-year restaurant business veteran. Growing up, her father had four restaurant locations in New York, and it was in those restaurants that her love of food started. In Myrtle Beach, she found an amazing sense of community leading her to open Johnny D's in the Grand Strand. Recently, Jamie was awarded "Best Chef" from South Carolina Woman Magazine and Grand Strand Magazine. In 2020, she released "Making It Delicious," her first cookbook.

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