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Governor Announces 2022 South Carolina Chef Ambassadors

COLUMBIA — (January 5, 2022) Today, South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster, Commissioner of Agriculture Hugh Weathers and South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism Director Duane Parrish appointed three chefs to serve as South Carolina Chef Ambassadors for 2022.

“South Carolina Chef Ambassadors do South Carolina a great service by shining a light on our state’s destinations, signature dishes and locally grown foods, and their own incredible talents,” Gov. McMaster said. “We’re proud to have these three great chefs represent our state.”

South Carolina Chef Ambassadors prepare dishes using [Certified South Carolina](#) produce, meats and seafood, supporting local farmers and highlighting our state’s food traditions.

“These three talented Chef Ambassadors honor South Carolina’s diverse culinary heritage and local ingredients,” said Commissioner of Agriculture Hugh Weathers. “Chefs connect with and promote our state’s farmers and help teach us all how to eat fresh, local food in season.”

Chef Ambassadors represent South Carolina at food festivals, media events and other forums. This is the eighth year of the program, which was enacted in 2014 to highlight South Carolina as a top culinary destination. The program unites agribusiness and tourism, two of the state’s largest industries, which together contribute tens of billions of dollars to the state’s economy each year and account for hundreds of thousands of jobs statewide.

“Our hospitality industry has been on a rollercoaster ride since March 2020,” said Duane Parrish, Director of the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism. “From shifting to a to-go model almost overnight, to navigating workforce challenges, to welcoming an influx of visitors as tourism began to rebound – they’ve really seen it all in a very short timeframe. The Chef Ambassador program highlights and celebrates some of the very best of what this resilient and tenacious industry has to offer, and helps showcase just how significant and extraordinary our culinary scene is in the Palmetto State.”

The 2022 South Carolina Chef Ambassadors are:

Chef John Ondo

The Atlantic Room at Kiawah Island Golf Resort | Kiawah Island, South Carolina

Executive Chef John Ondo of The Atlantic Room grew up playing in the tidal creeks of the Lowcountry, which left an indelible mark on him, as he has spent his 20-plus-year culinary career in Charleston drawing inspiration from the region’s fields and waterways. Chef Ondo has developed enduring relationships with local farmers and fishermen, and often stops by to visit and discuss how crops are coming in and to pick up produce that will appear on diners’ plates that night at The Atlantic Room. With his wry sense of humor and affable nature, Chef Ondo is a recognizable spokesperson for Lowcountry foodways.

Chef Chris Williams

Roy’s Grille | Lexington, South Carolina

As owner of catering company William Christopher’s and of Roy’s Grille, a beloved local restaurant inside an Exxon station, Chef Chris Williams stays busy. He grew up in Olar in Bamberg County, where his family grew their own vegetables and raised their own pigs and chickens. On the Roy’s Grille menu you will find house-smoked and cured bacon, house made pimento cheese, barbecue and signature barbecue sauces.

Chef Haydn Shaak

Restaurant 17 at Hotel Domestique | Travelers Rest, South Carolina

A graduate of the culinary program at Greenville Technical College, Chef Haydn Shaak has spent most of his life working in kitchens. His father was also a chef, so cooking became a significant part of his life from an early age; and at 16, he began an apprenticeship under his father at the Greenville restaurant City Range Steakhouse Grill. Over the next five years, he worked his way through the kitchen ranks at several establishments, eventually heading up prominent restaurants in Greenville and Travelers Rest before taking over Restaurant 17 in 2018. Haydn’s focus on local and seasonal ingredients, along with his dedication to classical techniques has elevated the culinary program at Restaurant 17.

To learn more about the program and past Chef Ambassadors, visit discoversouthcarolina.com/chef-ambassadors.

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