

Professional Culinary Institute Receives ACF Excellence in Education Award

The Professional Culinary Institute (PCI), the premier chef-owned culinary school located in Campbell, Calif., in the heart of the Silicon Valley, was recognized by the American Culinary Federation (ACF) at its annual National Convention at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas during the General Session on July 14, 2008.

PCI was awarded a very special recognition—the ACF Excellence in Education award—during a ceremony that took place in front of some of the best culinary artists in the country. The ACF Excellence in Education award recognizes PCI as one of America’s premier culinary schools. This marks the first time the ACF has given this award. With every American culinary school a possible candidate, PCI was selected for this high honor.

“I was pleasantly surprised,” says PCI President Richard Battista. “We are very humbled and appreciative to have been recognized for our many accomplishments and outstanding programs. We’ve certainly worked hard and take this wonderful award as a great compliment from the ACF for all of our achievements. As one of the United States’ premier culinary schools, we will continue to strive toward excellence.”

In addition, two members of the PCI team were awarded prestigious ACF Presidential Medallions. PCI’s Culinary Arts Department chair, Randy Torres, and culinary-arts student Keriann Von-Raesfeld each received the ACF 2008 Presidential Medallion. This award recognizes their commitment and service to the standards and excellence which the ACF exemplifies.

While it is highly unusual for a student to win an ACF Presidential Medallion, Von-Raesfeld’s extraordinary talent puts her among the best in the culinary industry, even at 22 years old. In May 2008, Von-Raesfeld was the first female to win the title, “Best Young Cook in the World,” at the Hans Bueschkens World Junior Chefs’ Challenge at the World Association of Chefs Societies’ biennial 2008 Congress held in Dubai. In addition, Von-Raesfeld was the only female to compete, and the first female to win, the Chaîne des Rôtisseurs National Young Chef Rôtisseur Competition, which was held at Johnson & Wales University in Charlotte, N.C., earlier this year. As a result of winning this competition, Von-Raesfeld will be moving on to Paris, France, in September, where she will represent the United States in the international competition, The Concours International Des Jeunes Commis Rôtisseurs.

Torres, who has been a respected culinary instructor and department chair at PCI since 2004, is a member of the U.S. Culinary Olympic Team and will represent the United States in the “Culinary Olympics” this October in Erfurt, Germany. This quadrennial event will attract more than 1,000 chefs from more than 30 countries, all competing for gold, silver and bronze medals. Torres is PCI’s Team Manager and—in addition to coaching many culinary and baking and pastry students over the years—has assisted Von-Raesfeld in soaring to the top of nearly every competition she has entered.