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**Finalists Selected for 6th Annual Real California Pizza Contest;
Eight Chefs to Showcase Innovative Pizzas with Real California Cheeses
at Napa Bake-Off Event**

Tracy, Calif. – June 26, 2024 – The California Milk Advisory Board (CMAB) today announced eight chef finalists in the 2024 Real California Pizza Contest (RCPC) – the sixth search for the best foodservice pizza recipes showcasing innovative uses of Real California cow’s milk cheeses. At stake is a \$28,500 prize pool and the prestige of winning one of the country’s most coveted pizza competitions.

The finalists for the 2024 Real California Pizza Contest are:

Protein Category

- Eddie Stalewski, Mercurio’s, Pittsburgh, Pa.
- Jose Valverde, Zorba’s Pizza, Millbrae, Calif.
- Leith Leiser-Miller, Psychic Pie, Sebastopol, Calif.
- Jay Falk, Caliente Pizza & Draft House, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Produce Category

- Michael Vakneen, Truly Pizza, Dana Point, Calif.
- Doug Dellaccio, Wayfarer Bread, La Jolla, Calif.

- Constantino Anezinos, Zorba's Pizza, Millbrae, Calif.
- Ray Cullison, Charlie's Pizzeria, Kingman, Ariz.

The finalists will come together August 7th at the Culinary Institute of America at Copia in Napa, Calif. to compete in a live bake-off event where the winner in each category will receive \$7,500. A new addition to the 2024 event is a special Three-Cheese Pizza competition where all eight finalists will be paired to compete for an additional \$7,500 in prizes. The remaining finalists will each take home \$750 for participating.

“Each year we evolve the Real California Pizza Contest to keep up with the creativity of the pizza community. The two new main categories, Protein and Produce, allow unlimited opportunities to explore with our California cow's milk cheeses. We're also excited about the three-cheese team competition, which will add a little drama to the bake-off event with competitors collaborating to present their very best version of this simple yet ultimately marketable pie,” said Mike Gallagher, Business and Market Development Consultant for the CMAB.

Joining the CMAB to judge the bake-off finals is a panel of pizza experts, including Tony Gemignani, chef, restaurateur, international pizza authority and President of the World Pizza Champions; Glenn Cybulski, certified pizzaiolo and award-winning executive chef; and Bill Crawford, the 2023 RCPC Grand Prize Winner and owner of Righteous Slice in Idaho. The judges chose the eight finalists from more than 180 recipe entries from throughout the United States.

Additional details on the bake-off, chef finalists and CMAB's foodservice partnership support are available at [Real California Pizza Contest](#).

California is a reliable, consistent source of sustainable dairy products used by chefs throughout the world. As the nation's largest dairy state, California boasts an impressive lineup of award-winning cheesemakers and dairy processors that help drive dining innovation nationwide powered by quality milk from California dairy farm families who are focused on a sustainable future.

Information, tools, and tips for foodservice operators are available at realcaliforniamilk.com/foodservice.

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About Real California Milk/the California Milk Advisory Board

The California Milk Advisory Board (CMAB), an instrumentality of the California Department of Food and Agriculture, is funded by the state's dairy farm families who lead the nation in sustainable dairy farming practices. With a vision to nourish the world with the wholesome goodness of Real California Milk, the CMAB's programs focus on increasing demand for California dairy products in the state, across the U.S. and around the world through advertising, public relations, research, and retail and foodservice promotional programs.

The Foodservice Division of the CMAB supports foodservice operators and distributors that use Real California dairy products. The CMAB offers marketing and promotional support for foodservice operators that purchase dairy products with the Real California Milk seal, which means they are made with milk from California's family dairy farms, using some of the most sustainable dairy practices in the nation.

For more information on sourcing cheese from California, contact the foodservice team at 209.883.6455 (MILK), businessdevelopment@cmab.net or [RCM Foodservice Website](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).