



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Research Chefs Association Announces Conference Keynote Speakers and Education

Chicago (Dec. 15, 2017) – The Research Chefs Association (RCA) has announced three of the four keynote speakers for the RCA Conference as well as the first round of breakout sessions. The highly anticipated event will take place in Savannah, Georgia from March 26-28, 2018 and will bring together food product development professionals to focus on the fast-growing discipline of Culinology® — the blending of culinary arts and food sciences.

“This year’s keynote speakers are set to deliver interactive presentations on the food product development industry’s most pressing topics,” said Jason Behrends, Ph.D., CCS®, president of the RCA Board of Directors and 2018 chair of the RCA Conference Programming Committee.

Ethan Brown, founder and chief executive officer of Beyond Meat, will be one of four keynote speakers at the 2018 conference. Beyond Meat is a company dedicated to building meat directly from plants and is the first to bring plant-based meat to major grocery chains. In his keynote presentation, Brown will introduce and explore the science used to assemble meat directly from plants, and discuss the consumer, market and broader ramifications of doing so.

Gerry Ludwig, CEC, corporate consulting chef at Gordon Food Service Consulting, will also share his insights in a keynote address. Ludwig will highlight the best and brightest new concepts from his most recent research, including full service, casual and fast-casual venues, the latest in unique handheld foods and chefs who are driving the next wave in creative culinary mash-ups.

Sharon Lykins is the senior director of product innovation at Denny’s and believes the food industry plays an important role in the economic and physical well-being (not destruction) of not only the United States, but the global population. Sharing her enthusiasm for being a keynote speaker at the conference, Lykins said, “I want to share my excitement and love of this industry with those who will propel us into the future to meet the needs of a global consumer.”

The conference will offer numerous education sessions focused on the hottest topics in food product development today, including food labeling trends, alternative ingredients, beverage development, sous vide, food waste and much more. Leveraging the 2018 location, attendees will receive insights on how Southern culture impacts the flavor and taste of the 2018 conference’s local cuisine in sessions such as “Squeezing Out a Living in South Georgia” and “The Seafood Terroir of the Low Country – Shrimp and Oysters.”

“Paired with education breakout sessions, competitions, networking opportunities and the Culinology® Expo, the RCA Conference will allow attendees to maximize their time in Savannah and return home with new knowledge and connections to expand their careers as well as unique experiences to fuel new product ideation,” said Behrends.

In addition, attendees can extend their local learning in pre-conference excursions and visit Savannah's first distillery since Prohibition, tour a 20-acre sustainable, organic farming project, participate in shrimping aboard the famous R/V Georgia Bulldog and join a sustainable soy tour.

There will also be four exciting competitions to round out the education for the event. On the Culinology® Expo show floor, attendees will find two exciting competitions where students and professionals compete to create a savory, Southern, Georgia-style dish in the National Savory Culinology® Competitions. In the second annual Evolution of Food Waste Product Development Competition, each student team will develop a food product using waste byproducts commonly produced within the industry and present a business case for commercializing that food product. Finally, mixologists will go head-to-head to earn the title of 'Star of the Bar' in the Culinology® Cocktail Competition.

Attendees who register by January 12, 2018 will save \$100 off the regular registration rate. Learn more about the RCA Conference and register at www.culinology.org/RCAConference.

Culinology® is a registered trademark of the Research Chefs Association.

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About the Research Chefs Association

Founded in 1996, the [Research Chefs Association](http://www.researchchefs.org) has rapidly grown to more than 2,000 members in the food product development industry, including chefs, food scientists, technologists, writers, nutritionists, academics, researchers, consultants, sales and marketing professionals, suppliers, co-packers, distributors and students. RCA integrates food sciences and culinary arts expertise to elevate product development and is committed to the advancement of Culinology®—the blending of the culinary arts and food sciences.

For more information on the RCA, visit www.culinology.org.