



## **NEWS RELEASE**

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## **Nominations Are Being Accepted for the 2018 Produce Excellence in Foodservice Awards Program**

WASHINGTON, D.C. (November 9, 2017) – United Fresh has opened the nomination period for the 2018 Produce Excellence in Foodservice Awards Program which honors the foodservice industry's most innovative produce performers.

The program, sponsored by PRO\*ACT, LLC since its inception, has honored more than 50 chefs and foodservice operators for their exceptional work in incorporating fresh produce in menu development, proper food safety and handling, engaging in community outreach and building an overall positive dining experience with fresh produce as a centerpiece.

"Chefs around the globe work hard every day to find innovative ways to delight diners with menu items featuring fresh produce," said Tom Stenzel, President & CEO, United Fresh Produce Association. "With PRO\*ACT's continued generous support, we are proud to recognize those chefs who are committed to making produce the centerpiece of the meal."

Winning chefs and foodservice professionals will be recognized in eight categories – Business in Industry, Casual & Family Dining Restaurants, Colleges & Universities, Fine Dining Restaurants, Hospitals & Healthcare, Hotels & Resorts, K-12 School Foodservice and Quick Service Restaurants.

"Fresh produce continues to drive success for the foodservice and culinary sectors, and chefs play a critical role in encouraging consumers to explore produce items," said Max Yeater, President of PRO\*ACT. "We are proud of our ongoing commitment to this exceptional program that honors culinary professionals who are making fresh produce the highlight of their menus."

Winners will be selected by a panel of United Fresh member representatives. Nominations must be submitted by January 19, 2018. The eight winning chefs and their corporate executives receive complimentary airfare, hotel accommodations and registrations to United Fresh 2018, June 25-27, 2018 in Chicago, and will be recognized at the event's Retail-Foodservice Celebration.

The 2017 winners in each category were:

- **Business in Industry:** Chef Ted Mathesius, Executive Chef, Adobe Café Lehi/Bon Appetit Management Company, Lehi, UT
- **Casual & Family Dining Restaurants:** Chef Shane Schaibly, Corporate Chef and Vice President of Culinary Strategy, First Watch Restaurants, Inc., Brandon, FL
- **Colleges & Universities:** Chef Eric Lindstrom, Deputy Director of Retail Dining/Executive Chef, United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, MD
- **Fine Dining Restaurants:** Chef Varin Keokitvon, Chef, Heartwood Provisions, Seattle, WA
- **Hospitals & Healthcare:** Chef Ralph Chavez, System Executive Chef, Touchpoint Healthcare Services, Austin, TX
- **Hotels & Resorts:** Chef Matt Smith, CEC, Executive Chef, Sheraton Columbus Hotel at Capitol Square, Columbus, OH

- **K-12 School Foodservice:** Robert Cuellar, Jr., Child Nutrition Program Director, Laredo Independent School District, Laredo, TX
- **Quick Service Restaurants:** Lacey Hudgins, Head of Product Development, Wildflower Bread Company, Scottsdale, AZ

Nominations for the 2018 program can be submitted at [www.unitedfresh.org/fsa](http://www.unitedfresh.org/fsa). For more information about the award program, contact Miriam Wolk, United Fresh Vice President, Member Services, at [mwolk@unitedfresh.org](mailto:mwolk@unitedfresh.org) or 202-303-3410.

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#### **About United Fresh Produce Association**

Founded in 1904, the United Fresh Produce Association serves companies at the forefront of the global fresh and fresh-cut produce industry, including growers, shippers, fresh-cut processors, wholesalers, distributors, retailers, foodservice operators, industry suppliers and allied associations. From its headquarters in Washington, D.C. and Western Regional office in Salinas, Calif., United Fresh and its members work year-round to make a difference for the produce industry by driving policies that increase consumption of fresh produce, shaping critical legislative and regulatory action, providing scientific and technical leadership in food safety, quality assurance, nutrition and health, and developing educational programs and business opportunities to assist member companies in growing successful businesses. For more information, visit [www.unitedfresh.org](http://www.unitedfresh.org) or call 202-303-3400.

#### **About PRO\*ACT, LLC**

PRO\*ACT is North America's leading distributor of fresh food to the foodservice and retail industries, sourcing from premier national, regional and local farmers. PRO\*ACT streamlines the produce supply chain, offering significant cost benefits and an easy, one-call solution to source the freshest produce from more than 70 third-party inspected, independently owned, local distribution centers across the United States and Canada. PRO\*ACT provides category cost management through commodity contract pricing, in-house consultation services and integrated produce program distribution management.