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**REAL CALIFORNIA MILK ANNOUNCES EIGHT PROFESSIONAL CHEF
FINALISTS IN NATIONAL PIZZA CONTEST**

Eighth annual contest brings top chefs to Napa to showcase innovative pizzas featuring Real California cheese and dairy products while competing for more than \$20k in prizes

Tracy, Calif. – June 1, 2026 – The California Milk Advisory Board (CMAB) today announced the eight finalists selected to compete in the 2026 Real California Pizza Contest, a nationwide competition celebrating creativity, craftsmanship, and the use of Real California cheese and dairy products in foodservice pizza recipes.

Chosen from a field of more than 200 entries submitted by culinary professionals from across the United States, the finalists will travel to Napa, Calif., for the opportunity to compete for more than \$20,000 in prize money during the live bake-off finals July 14th at the Culinary Institute of America at Copia.

Chef finalists will compete in two categories designed to showcase both menu-ready innovation and creative culinary expression using Real California cheese and dairy products. Four finalists will compete in each category, with one winner selected from California Freestyle and one winner selected from On the Menu.

California Freestyle

This category features an original pizza inspired by California flavors and ingredients that showcases Real California Mozzarella and at least two additional Real California dairy products.

- Oscar Venegas, Tony's Pizza Napoletana, San Francisco, Calif.
- Jimmy Henry, Jimmyhank Pizza, Harleysville, Penn.

- John McCaffrey, Yellow Bridge Brewing Tap and Table, Greensburg, Penn.
- Patrick Clifford, Skorch'd Pizza, Sacramento, Calif.

On the Menu

This category showcases currently menued, seasonal, or limited-time pizzas with Real California Mozzarella and at least one additional Real California dairy product.

- Randy Lewis, Hearth Wood Fired Pizza & Catering, Oakland, Calif.
- Ryan Ososky, Dtown pizzeria, West Hollywood, Calif.
- Melinda Carbajal, Simply Pizza Truck, Brighton, Colo.
- Zack Calder, Left Coast Pizza, Dayton, Nev.

An esteemed panel of judges will evaluate each finalist's pizza, selecting one winner from each category. The two category winners will each receive \$5,000, and the highest-scoring pizza overall will earn an additional \$2,500 Grand Prize award. The remaining finalists will each receive \$1,000 for reaching the finals.

In addition to the main competition, finalists will participate in a separate Three Cheese Pizza Bake-Off. Following a random drawing, chefs will form teams to create original three-cheese pizzas featuring a variety of Real California cheeses. The winning team members will each receive an additional \$1,000 bonus prize.

“The creativity and culinary innovation showcased in this year’s entries demonstrate the versatility and quality of Real California cheese and dairy products available for foodservice operators and pizza chefs nationwide,” said Katie Cameron, Director of Foodservice for the California Milk Advisory Board. “We look forward to seeing these chefs create memorable pizzas using sustainably sourced California dairy.”

California is the nation's leading producer of milk, butter, ice cream, and Hispanic-style cheeses, and the second-largest producer of cheese overall. Real California milk and dairy products are made with milk from California's family dairy farms.

At the July 14th bake-off finals, chefs will prepare their pizzas onsite for blind judging by a panel of acclaimed pizza experts:

- Tony Gemignani – Chef, restaurateur, international pizza authority, and president of the World Pizza Champions
- Glenn Cybulski – Certified pizzaiolo, award-winning executive chef and executive director of Chefs Feeding Kids
- Laura Meyer – International pizza champion, chef, restaurateur and co-founder of Fork to Future

Additional details on the bake-off, chef finalists, and CMAB’s foodservice partnership support are available at <https://realcaliforniamilkfoodservice.com/pizza-contest/>

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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's sustainable dairy products, award-winning California cheeses, and dairy ingredients across retail and foodservice channels in the state, throughout 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, pizza chefs, restaurants, and distributors that use Real California dairy products. The CMAB offers marketing and promotional support for operators that purchase dairy products bearing the Real California Milk seal, which signifies they are made with milk from California's family dairy farms. Through programs including the Real California Pizza Contest, the CMAB helps showcase innovative foodservice pizza recipes and culinary applications featuring California cheeses and dairy products.

For more information on sourcing Real California Mozzarella, and other premium California cheese and dairy products for foodservice and pizza programs, contact the foodservice team at 209.883.6455 (MILK), email businessdevelopment@cmab.net, or visit RealCaliforniaMilkFoodservice.com, [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [YouTube](#).

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