

# ACF MONTEREY BAY CHAPTER CA083

By John Bartimole

As president of the ACF Monterey Bay Chapter in California, **ACF Chef Jacques Wilson, CEC, AAC**, believes strongly not only in helping current chefs thrive but also in attracting and nurturing to-be chefs as well.

That philosophy was — and still is — crucial as the chapter, like so many others, has had its membership numbers recover after the COVID-19 pandemic, and is bolstering its efforts to attract new chefs to the profession.

Through it all, the chapter has held steadfast to its mission statement: “To make a positive difference for culinarians internationally through education, apprenticeship and certification, while creating a fraternal bond of respect and integrity among culinarians everywhere.”

The Monterey Bay Chapter COVID-19 Relief Fund was launched during the throes of the pandemic to help cooks, dishwashers and sous chefs who lost wages during and after shutdown. The chapter contributed a \$5,000 dollar-for-dollar match to help those affected. During heavy rainstorms earlier this year, ACF Chef Anthony Guajardo, owner of Mijo’s Taqueria and a member of the chapter, drew on relief funds raised to assist local Capitola cooks, dishwashers and sous chefs who lost wages. That kind of outreach not only helped sustain those in need, it spoke to the core of the chapter’s mission — promoting and preserving the profession.

“Our chapter is very vibrant,” Chef Wilson says. “Typically, we have averaged about 80 members over the past eight to 10 years, except for during COVID, when we dropped to 54. But, as of right now, we’re up to 79, so we’re back to where we usually are.”

But the core of the chapter’s membership is active in a variety of the organization’s activities, many of which focus on working with youth and young adults, including: The Boys & Girls Clubs of Monterey County, MEarth, Rancho Cielo Drummond Culinary Academy, Monterey Peninsula College and Palenke Arts, as well as other local youth organizations.



Clockwise from left: Longtime ACF Monterey Bay Chapter member Bert P. Cutino, CEC, AAC, HOF, HBOT; ACF Monterey Bay Chapter President Jacques Wilson, CEC, AAC; Monterey Bay Chapter members during the Cooking for Capitola fundraiser.

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**-CHEF JACQUES WILSON, CEC, AAC**

The Monterey chapter has two scholarships managed by the Community Foundation for Monterey County; one is for young culinarians attending culinary school to become a chef or a pastry chef. This scholarship is named after the founder of the chapter, Marc H. Verdrines. The other scholarship is for the professional chef or pastry chef in the kitchen looking for opportunities for continuing education to enhance skills.

The other scholarship offered is named after **ACF Bert P. Cutino, CEC, AAC, HOF, HBOT**, an ACF member since 1972 and early Monterey Bay Chapter member; co-founder of The Sardine Factory Restaurant, a 55-year-old institution in Monterey; current Monterey Bay AAC chair; and past national AAC chair. Chef Cutino, a Monterey native, founded the Culinary Classique d'Elegance, a fundraising dinner benefitting Meals on Wheels of the Monterey Peninsula. Last year was the 26th annual event featuring 26 guest chefs held at the Inn at Spanish Bay in Pebble Beach; the next dinner takes place Nov. 18. Since its inception, the event has raised \$5 million. Earlier this year in March, The Monterey County Hospitality Association presented the Hospitality Professional of the Year Award to Chef Cutino at the association's Annual Awards Gala at the Portola Plaza Hotel & Spa in Monterey.

In addition to these scholarships, Chef Wilson says, "we have partnered with the Drummond Culinary Academy and Monterey Peninsula College to inspire the next generation of chefs. What's encouraging and heartening is that we often see these opportunities as an encouragement to the next generation."

Chef Wilson looks to such programs to help inspire the passion he and those of his generation have for the culinary arts. "You have to have a passion for this profession if you're going to succeed," he says. "And you also have to have a passion once you're in to constantly learn and improve."

Toward that end, the Monterey Bay Chapter's passion is education and helping the community. The chapter's vision statement — "Building Communities Through Food and Education" — is reflected in many of its activities. Recently, chapter members participated in Salvage Social Hour, an event celebrating Earth Day and Food Waste Prevention Week, featuring upcycled foods. Proceeds benefited the University of California, Merced Basic Needs program, which helps those struggling with food shortages and hunger.



Monterey Bay Chapter President Jacques Wilson, CEC, AAC, presents scholarship awards.

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ACF Monterey Bay Chapter members pictured during the Cooking for Capitola fundraiser; ACF Bert P. Cutino, CEC, AAC, HOF, HBOT, receives the Hospitality Professional of the Year Award from the Monterey County Hospitality Association during the association's annual awards gala; ACF Chef Pamela Burns participates in a Childhood Nutrition Day event; Monterey Bay Chapter President Jacques Wilson, CEC, AAC, pictured with local culinary students.

The chapter was honored in February with ACF's Community Outreach Granted program for its volunteerism with the Boys & Girls Club of Merced County teaching basic cooking skills. The program introduced earlier this year celebrated chapters and ACF members who give back to their community with a monthly opportunity to win a \$250 grant.

Also recently, several of the chapter's chefs — **ACF Chefs Anthony Pangelina and Jonathan Gutierrez and Chef Mitch Vanagten** — hosted a "Meet the Farmer" event, held at University of California, Merced. The event featured Marchini Farms, a large-scale radicchio grower, which proved popular with members. **ACF Chef Pamela Burns**, chair of the chapter's Chef & Child program, inspired youth at Palenke Arts with her baking skills.

When it comes to attracting new members, "Our emphasis on education is helpful," Chef Wilson says. "Sometimes, a chef will bring a spouse or student to an event and they'll see what we're all about, and it sometimes results in a new member or a career." The chapter hosted an ACF practical exam as part

of the certification process in June, and Chef Wilson says the chapter's goal is to try to do at least two certification practical exams per year, depending on participation.

The chapter enjoys good involvement at its general meetings, but tours are especially popular with its members. The chapter enjoys "great support" from its vendor partners, Chef Wilson says, particularly local ones such as Monterey Farms, an artichoke supplier.

Chef Wilson traces his own love for food and cooking to a decision he made just after high school, prompted by an instructor who had provided an introductory internship in culinary skills.

"After that experience, I wanted to learn more," Chef Wilson says. "Many of my friends were going off to the military, but my instructor urged me to go to the Culinary Institute of America. That was when it really hit me that was what I really wanted to do."

At home, Chef Wilson enjoys a good meatloaf and "cooking in the Pacific Rim style." Even after decades in the kitchen, that love and passion for cooking hasn't abated, and he and his fellow chapter members continue to help current chefs to thrive — and to bring new chefs into the profession.