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Oceania Cruises® Unveils Food & Wine Best New Chefs Alumni Selected as Godparents of Oceania Allura™

MIAMI, Oct. 13, 2025 /PRNewswire/ -- Oceania Cruises®, the world's leading culinary- and destination-focused luxury cruise line, today announced Food & Wine's acclaimed Best New Chefs franchise will serve as the official godparent of the line's newest ship, *Oceania Allura*, which debuted in July 2025 and will be christened in Miami on November 13. This historic collaboration marks the first time the prestigious godparent title has been bestowed upon a culinary brand rather than an individual, underscoring Oceania Cruises' unwavering commitment to culinary excellence, creativity, and global discovery.



Representing the Food & Wine Best New Chefs franchise as godparents during the christening ceremony in Miami on November 13, 2025, are celebrated alumni **Tavel Bristol-Joseph, Katie Button, Calvin Eng, Aisha Ibrahim, George Mendes**, and **Lawrence "LT" Smith** who will officiate the time-honored tradition of breaking a Champagne bottle across the ship's bow, bestowing good fortune on *Oceania Allura* and all who sail aboard her.

"At Oceania Cruises, our ships are a celebration of rich culture, exceptional cuisine, and global discovery, and *Oceania Allura* is no exception," said Jason Montague, Chief Luxury Officer of Oceania Cruises. "Paying homage to the Food & Wine Best New Chefs program and having its alumni represent as her godparents reflects our belief that food lies at the heart of global exploration. These visionary chefs embody the spirit of culinary excellence, and we are honored to have them join the Oceania Cruises family."

Since 1988, the Food & Wine Best New Chefs program has honored nearly 400 rising culinary stars who have redefined how we cook, eat, and connect through food. Now, for the first time, the franchise itself will serve as godparent of *Oceania Allura*, with a distinguished group of alumni chefs officiating the ceremony. Together, these chefs embody the program's global legacy of innovation and creativity while championing Oceania Cruises' commitment to epicurean excellence at sea—offering travelers unforgettable experiences centered around food and led by the world's most celebrated chefs.

"For nearly four decades, Food & Wine Best New Chefs have shaped dining in America and inspired the way we experience food," said Tom Bair, Publisher of Food & Wine. "We're thrilled to celebrate this legacy with Oceania Cruises, a partner that shares our passion for extraordinary cuisine and discovery, and to make this milestone christening with journeys where food is every bit as memorable as the destinations."

Oceania Cruises' newest 1,200-guest ship promises an elevated onboard experience defined by immersive destinations and The Finest Cuisine at Sea®. With the grandeur of its signature Grand Dining Room, an expansive hands-on professional-grade Culinary Center and accompanying Chef's Studio, and the return of Oceania Cruises' signature French restaurant, Jacques, *Oceania Allura* embodies the cruise line's commitment to culinary excellence while pushing the boundaries of innovation.

Oceania Allura has twelve distinct culinary venues, including four always complimentary specialty dining venues: Jacques, pan-Asian Red Ginger, Italian Toscana, and Polo Grill, the line's sophisticated steakhouse. New to the brand is the Crêperie, serving delicate, authentic French crêpes, delicious Belgian and bubble waffles and decadent Italian ice cream sundaes. Further underscoring its reputation for The Finest Cuisine at Sea, *Oceania Allura* maintains an unrivaled ratio of one chef for every eight guests, with half of the ship's crew dedicated to culinary operations.

This prestigious partnership underscores Oceania Cruises' commitment to the enduring influence of chefs on luxury travel. This past August, 2023 Food & Wine Best New Chefs alumni Aisha Ibrahim led the line's inaugural Best New Chefs Cruise in Alaska, treating guests to exclusive menus, live cooking demonstrations, and curated pairing experiences. By deepening its decades-long relationship with Food & Wine and honoring the Best New Chefs franchise as godparent, Oceania Cruises reaffirms its dedication to delivering exceptional culinary experiences.

Food & Wine Best New Chefs alumni who will represent the iconic Food & Wine Best New Chefs franchise at the Christening and Naming Ceremony of *Oceania Allura* include:

Katie Button (2015 F&W BNC) is a five-time James Beard Award nominee, cookbook author, and media personality best known as the chef and founder of Asheville's acclaimed Cúrate restaurant group. A former engineer turned chef, she trained under Ferran Adrià and José Andrés before opening her own award-winning concepts, including Cúrate Bar de Tapas, recipient of the 2022 James Beard Award for Outstanding Hospitality. She also hosts From the Source on Magnolia Network and authored Cúrate: Authentic Spanish Food from an American Kitchen. Through her living wage–certified restaurant group, Button champions equitable, sustainable practices in hospitality.

Calvin Eng (2022 F&W BNC) is the chef and owner of Bonnie's, a celebrated Cantonese American restaurant in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, and the author of Salt Sugar MSG: A

Cantonese American Cookbook. Born and raised in Brooklyn in a traditional Chinese family, Eng founded Bonnie's to honor his heritage and reimagine the flavors of his upbringing through a modern lens. Since opening, Bonnie's has garnered widespread acclaim from The New York Times, The New Yorker, New York Magazine, Eater, Bon Appétit, and more. Eng has been recognized as a James Beard Award finalist for Emerging Chef, a Food & Wine Best New Chef, a Forbes 30 Under 30 honoree, a StarChefs Rising Star, and a two-time James Beard semifinalist for Best Chef: New York State.

Aisha Ibrahim (2023 F&W BNC) is an acclaimed chef celebrated for her global perspective and leadership in modern fine dining. Born in Mindanao, Philippines, and raised in the U.S., she began her culinary journey rooted in her family's cooking traditions before honing her craft in some of the world's top kitchens, including Manresa, Azurmendi, and Nihonryori Ryugin. In 2021, she made history as the first female Executive Chef at Seattle's iconic Canlis Restaurant, where she served until 2025. Recognized among Food & Wine's Best New Chefs (2023), TIME's 100 Next (2024), and a 2025 James Beard Award semifinalist, Ibrahim continues to push the boundaries of culinary innovation and equitable kitchen culture

Tavel Bristol-Joseph (2020 F&W BNC) is the Partner, Pastry Chef, and Director of Hospitality for Emmer & Rye Hospitality Group, overseeing seven acclaimed concepts across Austin and San Antonio. Named one of Food & Wine's Best New Chefs (2020) and Esquire's Pastry Chef of the Year (2024), he has earned multiple James Beard semifinalist nods for Best Chef: Texas. Under his leadership, Hestia received a Michelin Star, while Emmer & Rye earned a Green Star and Bib Gourmand recognition. Born in Georgetown, Guyana, Bristol-Joseph continues to shape Texas' dining landscape through innovation, warmth, and community-driven hospitality.

George Mendes (2011 F&W BNC) is a Culinary Institute of America graduate and 2011 Food & Wine Best New Chef best known for bringing modern Portuguese cuisine to the forefront of New York City's dining scene. He was the executive chef/owner of the Michelin-starred Aldea from 2009 to 2022 and opened Veranda at the ModernHaus SoHo hotel in 2021. Mendes began his career at Bouley and L'Arpège and went on to open Lupulo in 2015. He is the co-author of My Portugal: Recipes and Stories and has appeared on Top Chef Masters, The Best Thing I Ever Ate, and Worst Cooks in America. He is currently based in Boston and is embarking on a new fine dining restaurant project along with a cafe bakery in the South End neighborhood.

Lawrence "LT" Smith (2024 F&W BNC) is an NFL hopeful turned award-winning chef and founder of Chilte in Phoenix, where he redefines Southwestern cuisine through bold, ingredient-driven dishes rooted in Mexican, Black, and Midwestern traditions. His cooking blends Sonoran chiltepin with African techniques and soulful nods to Mexican comfort, creating flavors that are vibrant, balanced, and deeply personal. Named one of Food & Wine's Best New Chefs (2024) and a 2025 James Beard Award semifinalist, Smith has earned national acclaim for pushing culinary boundaries while telling stories of heritage, identity, and culture through every plate.

A full overview of *Oceania Allura's* 2026 itineraries can be found at OceaniaCruises.com.

About Oceania Cruises

Oceania Cruises ® is the world's leading culinary- and destination-focused luxury cruise line. The line's eight small, luxurious ships carry a maximum of 1,250 guests and feature The Finest Cuisine at Sea ® and destination-rich itineraries that span the globe. Expertly curated

travel experiences are available aboard the designer-inspired, small ships, which call on more than 600 marquee and boutique ports in more than 100 countries on seven continents, on voyages that range from seven to more than 200 days. Oceania Cruises ® has four Sonata Class ships on order scheduled for delivery in 2027, 2029, 2032, and 2035. Oceania Cruises ® is a wholly owned subsidiary of Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings Ltd. (NYSE: NCLH). To learn more, visit www.nclhltd.com.

All expected delivery dates are preliminary and subject to change.

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