



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Leia Bosco

Susan Penrod PR (SPPR)

Cell: 954.815.7412 / leia@susanpenrod.com

THE VISIT LAUDERDALE FOOD & WINE FESTIVAL (VLFWF) - CELEBRATING ITS FIFTH ANNIVERSARY - ANNOUNCES 2024 HEADLINING CELEBRITY CHEFS: CHEF AARÓN SÁNCHEZ, CHEF JASON SMITH, CHEF NANCY FULLER AND CHEF NICOLE LAYOG PLUS THE 2024 SIGNATURE EVENT LINEUP

Famed TV Celebrity Chefs take to the stage for a variety of live cooking demonstrations at The Grand Tasting, part of a week-long series of VIP foodie experiences for 'Everyone Under the Sun'

FORT LAUDERDALE, FL – (June 29, 2023) – The [Visit Lauderdale Food & Wine Festival](#), celebrating its fifth anniversary, is a seven-day series of curated culinary experiences and Signature Events celebrating all who contribute to the ever-evolving epicurean scene in South Florida and beyond. The festival will take place **January 8-14, 2024**, welcoming headlining chefs: *MasterChef* judge **Chef Aarón Sánchez, Chef Jason Smith, Chef Nancy Fuller and Chef Nicole Layog**. In addition, the Festival has announced the dates for the must-see, must-eat Signature Events.

"Growing each year with more renowned talent, more indulgent and hands-on experiences, and more must-savor concepts, it's no wonder that the Visit Lauderdale Food & Wine Festival has become one of the most sought-after epicurean destinations for foodies from around the world," said **Stacy Ritter, president & CEO of Visit Lauderdale**. "Celebrating our culinary community and fostering growth for our tourism economy, the Visit Lauderdale Food & Wine Festival serves up something exceptional for 'Everyone Under the Sun.'"

A new year, a bolder lineup, guests can expect more exemplary talent, elevated signature events and access to some of the most talented epicurean visionaries of our time.

Celebrity Chefs Showcase star-worthy skills

New to the lineup of featured headline chefs, the VLFWF welcomes award-winning chef, TV personality, author and philanthropist **Chef Aarón Sánchez** to the main stage at The Grand Tasting on January 14, 2024. Known for his role as a judge on FOX's hit culinary competition series *MasterChef* and *MasterChef Junior*, and *Food Network* shows *Chopped* and *Chopped Junior*, to name a few; his revered restaurant Johnny Sánchez in New Orleans, LA; and as an author of a series of cookbooks and a personal memoir, Chef Sanchez will host an entertaining and dynamic cooking demonstration for all The Grand Tasting guests.

Sharing the stage are celebrity chefs Jason Smith and Nancy Fuller for a North vs. South showdown. **Chef Jason Smith** – a "Triple Crown" winner in the competitive kitchens of *Food Network*; winning *Holiday Baking Championship* (season 3), *Holiday Baking Championship: Kids vs Adults* (2016), and the ultimate title of *Next Food Network Star* (season 13) – will serve up a savory dish with a side of southern hospitality, paying homage to his native roots in Kentucky. Representing the North from Upstate New York will be **Chef Nancy Fuller**, owner of Ginsberg's Food and current judge of *Food Network's* *Holiday Baking Championship* and *Spring Baking Championship*. These two celebrity culinary masterminds will bring a flair of foodie theatrics to the main stage for a friendly battle of chef skills.

This year the VLFWF demonstration stage will also welcome **Chef Nicole Layog** – former *Big Brother* (Season 24) contestant, and seasoned chef taking a hands-on approach to mastering any and every

challenge extended to her; from being a street police patrol officer in Broward County, FL, then balancing the culinary life with the reality show hype, to curating intimate dinners that make every guest savor every thoughtfully cooked bite – Chef Layog will take the stage to turn every foodie fan's dream into reality.

A Taste of What's to Come

Consider the events below an appetizer to the full course menu soon-to-be-served by the Visit Lauderdale Food & Wine Festival. These **Signature Events** will ultimately be complemented by the VLFWF Dining Series and Culinary Education Series, where guests can sharpen their kitchen skills, learn how to make the ultimate cocktail, explore the world of wine and so much more. These experiences are set to be announced this Fall.

Guests can shake things up at a master mixologist showdown during **Bar Fight! A Spirited Competition** – presented by the Fort Lauderdale Downtown Development Authority – hosted on Wednesday, January 10, 2024 at 6:30 p.m. at Rooftop @1WLO. Standing champion Myles Robinson, a mixology Influencer with @StandishCocktails, is certainly not shakin' nor stirred by this year's stiff competition and is ready to defend his 2023 victory where he'll go against master mixologists in a head-to-head, no-holds barred matchup that will declare the 'Official Cocktail of DowntownFTL.' Tickets to this ultimate shakedown start at \$59 per person.

Get ready to rock as VLFWF rolls in the all-new **Wok 'n Roll**, an Asian street food and music experience – hosted on Thursday, January 11, 2024 at 6:30 p.m. at Backyard. Celebrate the flavors of Asia paired with good old-fashioned 'Rock 'n Roll'. In partnership with *Two Happy Buddha's*, this cultural experience will highlight Asian cuisine and culinary artistry throughout Broward County. Tickets to this rockin' good time start at \$59 per person.

Taking the classic poolside BBQ to a level of luxury and epic showdown of pitmaster skills is the **Poolside BBQ Battle** – also presented by the Fort Lauderdale Downtown Development Authority – at Hyatt Centric Las Olas on Friday, January 12, 2024 at 7 p.m. All smoke and no mirrors here, as pitmasters showcase their best BBQ creations in a quest to be crowned 2024 Poolside BBQ Battle Champion. Tickets for this showdown start at \$69 per person.

Foodies with a taste for more variety can feast their eyes (and fill their stomachs) at **The Grand Tasting** on Saturday, January 13, 2024 from noon-4 p.m. at Las Olas Oceanside Park. This beachside culinary celebration features four hours of unlimited bites and sips, cooking demonstrations, live music and much more. A recipe for entertainment, **Chef Sánchez** takes to the stage for a masterful chef demonstration, while **Chefs Smith and Fuller** show up for the showdown of a North vs. South cook-off. And rounding out the on-stage sizzle, is **Chef Layog** also hosting a can't miss cooking demonstration. Tickets to this four-hour feast range from \$149 per person for VIP and \$75 per person for General Admission.

Concluding the week-long epicurean excitement is **Picnic in the Park presented by Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital** on Sunday, January 14, 2024 starting at noon at Las Olas Oceanside Park. Future foodies (aka the kiddos) and parents alike will enjoy a curated lineup of food trucks, hands-on culinary classes for the whole family, kid-friendly cooking demonstrations, live entertainment, the JDCH Kid's Zone and local artisan vendors. Don't worry Mom and Dad, we've got you covered with a variety of wine and spirit seminars throughout the day. Admission is complimentary.

The Cause

Cooking for a cause is an understatement when considering the Visit Lauderdale Food & Wine Festival dedicates its entire week-long program in support of **Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital** (JDCH).

"Going into five years of rounding up the most impressive chefs, mixologists, and restaurants that all benefit a tremendous cause, you can say we have a taste for philanthropic foodie fun, and aren't done yet," says **Visit Lauderdale Food & Wine Festival co-founder Kate Reed**. "We're inspired and motivated more than ever by all the talent, purveyors and foodie-fun seekers, that unite each year to support our official charity partner, **Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital**. This is where the culinary community feeds our entire community by cooking up awareness, support and funds for organizations that are equally as driven, like Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital."

Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital will receive a portion of all proceeds from the seven-day culinary experience. Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital is one of the region's leading pediatric hospitals, offering a comprehensive scope of healthcare services and programs in a child-friendly atmosphere. It is a full-service, pediatric hospital that treats minor illnesses, trauma-related accidents and some of the most complex medical conditions.

Get Your Foodie Fix (aka Tix!)

Talk about an early-bird special! Be first at the table to buy your tickets and receive early pricing for all Signature Events through July 5, 2023. To purchase tickets visit: www.VLFoodWine.com

About The Visit Lauderdale Food & Wine Festival (formerly the Greater Fort Lauderdale Food & Wine Festival): Set to once again celebrate the food, wine, craft beer and spirits scene at unique venues in Greater Fort Lauderdale, the annual Visit Lauderdale Food & Wine Festival – founded by **Kate Reed and Phillip Marro**, festival entrepreneurs – includes seven days of culinary experiences taking place January 8-14, 2024, with various sanctioned events throughout the calendar year. From our 24 miles of beautiful beaches, to sprawling downtown communities including emerging art districts, our events will offer a unique setting that will showcase why Greater Fort Lauderdale is so special to us all as we benefit local charity. For the latest information about the Visit Lauderdale Food & Wine Festival please visit www.VLFoodWine.com and follow @VLFoodWine on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter and YouTube (#VLFWF)

About Joe DiMaggio's Children's Hospital: Established in 1992, Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital combines advanced technology and the expertise of the largest, most diverse group of board-certified pediatric specialists in the region. With its summer 2011 expansion, Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital now has 226 beds and is South Florida's newest freestanding children's hospital. The hospital is staffed 24 hours a day by world-class pediatric specialists, specialty-trained nurses and ancillary support staff. Today, more than 650 physicians are on the medical staff. For more information, please visit [Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital](http://www.JoeDiMaggioChildrensHospital.com).

About Visit Lauderdale: Visit Lauderdale is the official destination marketing organization for Greater Fort Lauderdale and serves as the tourism department for Broward County, Florida. Visit Lauderdale promotes the area's 31 municipalities to a global audience of leisure and business travelers as the ideal place for Everyone Under the Sun in recognition of the area's diverse and welcoming vibe, and books conventions into the Greater Fort Lauderdale/Broward County Convention Center and area hotels and resorts. Find more information at visitlauderdale.com and follow @VisitLauderdale on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/visitlauderdale), [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/visitlauderdale), [Twitter](https://twitter.com/visitlauderdale) and [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/visitlauderdale).

###