

Whitefish Food & Wine Concludes Its Second Annual Festival with a Sold-Out Week of Culinary Excellence

Co-Founded by Award-Winning Chef Todd English, the Festival Cemented Whitefish as a Rising Culinary Destination

WHITEFISH, MT, UNITED STATES, September 29, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The second annual [Whitefish Food & Wine](#) Festival officially wrapped on September 14, 2025, after a week-long celebration that brought together world-class chefs, wineries, and culinary enthusiasts in Montana's Flathead Valley. Building on the momentum of its 2024 debut, this year's edition elevated the experience with expanded events, and a distinctly local flavor that solidified Whitefish as an unexpected yet remarkable culinary hub.

The festival, co-founded by 4x James Beard Award-winning Chef Todd English, Whitefish entrepreneur and real estate investor Joe Hess, and internationally renowned event producer Ryan Heil (Founder of Axxess Entertainment), once again took place at the scenic Haskill Creek Farms and participating restaurants in Whitefish.

Attendees enjoyed intimate wine dinners with unique winery and culinary collaborations and the signature Grand Tasting Sessions, which featured more than 100 wines, live cooking demonstrations with notable chefs, and an array of food offerings from top local purveyors.

"We are really pleased with the amazing growth and turnout this year. Between the sold-out dinner events, the audience response to the demonstrations on the BoA Kitchen Stage, and the impact our culinary partners had on the wine tasting experience at the Grand Tastings, it was a truly special week and we cannot wait to bring it back again next year. The crowd and the chefs and the winery teams combined to create something truly unique for the Whitefish community, and we are grateful for everyone who came out to support," said Ryan Heil.



"This year, we turned up the volume with more flavor, more experience, more adventure," said Chef Todd English. "Our goal was to deepen the connection between guests and the food, wine, and landscape that makes this region so special."

English highlighted the dinners as particularly memorable. "The dinner at Abruzzo with Jeremy Grossman, where he blended delicacies like abalone and caviar with Montana bison and elk. Truly unique," he said.

On the wine front, English emphasized the strength of emerging Northwest producers: "We are seeing extreme growth in regions outside of California, Washington State, Oregon. I think you'll get wines very much in line with the Northwest. They're really emerging and becoming national and even international players."

"First, the setting. And then the enthusiasm of the local clientele," said English. "Using local ingredients, applying international techniques, it's a beautiful melting pot of what's available in Montana. People never thought of it that way before, but now it's being exposed, showing rich culinary ingredients and techniques unique to the region."

The sustainability theme that defined the festival's launch year continued to influence menus and operations. "Finally, in this country, people are realizing you don't have to ship produce from everywhere. It's more seasonally based now. You're limited to what's in season but that's OK, you learn how to work with it. If you look at cuisines around the world, that's how they've always done it," said English.

Culinary entertainment thrived on the live stage, where chefs engaged in spirited competitions and cooking demonstrations. "Whenever you create a culinary mashup like this, it naturally evolves. When you bring great culinary minds together, good stuff is bound to come out," English remarked.

Beyond the kitchen, the natural beauty of Whitefish gave the festival its soul. "The setting is amazing, looking out at the mountains, surrounded by nature. Eating outdoors changes the experience, gives it a different perspective," said English.

When asked which event he most anticipated, his answer was simple: "Mine, of course, Saturday



Photo credit Joseph Mayden

night," he laughed. Despite international recognition, the festival has retained its community-driven spirit. "I like the local aspect. It doesn't feel like a big corporate event. It feels more local, really put on by the community," English said.

That blend of world-class quality with intimate, local authenticity is what sets Whitefish Food & Wine apart. "By taking common foods and doing them in uncommon ways. Giving them a twist. Bringing in international flavors but also incorporating what's local, that's the exciting part for me," English shared.

Looking ahead, the vision is expansive. "As it gets more recognized internationally, I'd like to bring in more international influences. That gives it a different perspective. In five years, I think you'll see more of that, while still keeping it local. Whitefish has the potential to be an international player in the culinary world," English said. His advice to any newcomers was equally inviting: "Have fun. It's beautiful and very unexpected. Wide-open land, natural and untouched. You don't see a lot of that if you're from a big city."

With another successful year in the books, Whitefish Food & Wine is now firmly established as a premier culinary destination, pairing Montana's natural beauty with world-class talent and unforgettable hospitality.

About Whitefish Food & Wine:

Launched in 2024, Whitefish Food & Wine is an annual celebration of culinary and hospitality excellence in Montana's Flathead Valley. Co-founded by Chef Todd English, Ryan Heil, and Joe Hess, the festival combines breathtaking natural beauty with top-tier culinary experiences. Events include Grand Tastings, chef-curated dinners, educational seminars, outdoor adventures, and VIP gatherings at premier local venues.

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