

The Dairy Alliance Celebrates North Carolina Chefs at 2026 NCRLA Chef Showdown

DURHAM, NC, UNITED STATES, August 25, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Dairy Alliance, a nonprofit organization funded by dairy farm families in the Southeast, is proud to once again support the North Carolina Restaurant and Lodging Association (NCRLA) Chef Showdown, an annual competition that highlights the creativity and talent of North Carolina chefs, pastry chefs, and mixologists across the state.



Presented by the North Carolina Department of Agriculture, the NCRLA Chef Showdown showcases North Carolina's rich culinary scene while celebrating the local ingredients that make it unique, including real dairy products from local farms.

Throughout the competition, chefs and mixologists compete in a series of preliminary and semi-final rounds, crafting both savory and sweet dishes as well as cocktails and mocktails. The competition concludes in the Grand Finale on September 2, 2026, from 6:00 PM to 8:30 PM at Bay 7 on the American Tobacco Campus in Durham, NC, where top finalists go head-to-head for titles including NCRLA Chef of the Year, Pastry Chef of the Year, and Mixologist & Distillery of the Year.

As part of the Grand Finale, The Dairy Alliance presents the Dairy Does More® award, recognizing competitors who creatively incorporate real dairy products into their dishes and beverages. Awards are given for Best Savory Dish, Best Dessert, Best Cocktail, and Best Mocktail, highlighting the versatility and flavor that real dairy brings to culinary creations.

"Events like the NCRLA Chef Showdown are a powerful way to showcase how real dairy can elevate dishes across every category, from savory plates to desserts and beverages," said Farrah Newberry, CEO at The Dairy Alliance. "We're proud to support our North Carolina chefs who are using high-quality dairy to create innovative, memorable experiences for guests."

While dairy use is not required in the competition, many chefs choose to incorporate it for its

flavor, texture, and nutritional value. From creamy sauces and artisan cheeses to rich desserts and crafted cocktails, real dairy continues to play a key role in professional kitchens across North Carolina.

The Grand Finale is open to the public and draws hundreds of attendees each year, offering guests the opportunity to sample dishes, meet chefs, and experience the best of North Carolina's culinary talent in one place.

To learn more about the NCRLA Chef Showdown and purchase tickets, visit <https://www.ncrla.org/ncrla-events/2026-ncrla-chef-showdown/>.

About The Dairy Alliance

The Dairy Alliance is a nonprofit organization funded by dairy farm families in the Southeast. The organization works to raise awareness about the nutritional benefits of real dairy milk and dairy foods while supporting local farmers and promoting sustainable dairy practices.

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