

Three Top Chef and Sommelier Teams to Compete in Copa Jerez USA Finals November 3rd at Institute of Culinary Education

Each finalist team will prepare a three-course menu paired with Sherry and present it live to an esteemed five-member jury.

NEW YORK CITY, NY, UNITED STATES, October 27, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Copa Jerez](#), the biennial international gastronomic competition, announces the three chef and sommelier teams who will compete in the Copa Jerez USA Finals on November 3rd at the Institute of Culinary Education in New York City. An open call for entries drew submissions from many of the country's top restaurants, chefs, and sommeliers, and these three teams rose to the top. The winning team will represent the United States at Copa Jerez XII in Jerez de la Frontera, Spain in June 2027. Internationally recognized as the leading Sherry and food pairing competition, Copa Jerez is held every two years and organized by the Sherry Council in Jerez de la Frontera. Each finalist team will prepare a three-course menu paired with Sherry and present it live to a five-member jury. The finalist teams are:

COMMON THREAD | SAVANNAH, GA

Chef/Owner Brandon Carter and Wine Director Libby Burk

CASA MONO | NEW YORK, NY

Executive Chef Jonathan Melendez and Beverage Director Andrew Bridges

NUDIBRANCH | NEW YORK, NY



Copa Jerez



Partners and supporters of Copa Jerez

Chef/Owner Jeffrey Kim and Wine Director Sammi Schachter

At Common Thread in Savannah, Chef Brandon Carter was a 2025 James Beard Award semifinalist for Best Chef: Southeast. The restaurant was also named one of Bon Appétit's 50 Best New Restaurants in 2022. Sommelier Libby Burk, who is also the restaurant's general manager, was named a StarChefs Charleston-Savannah Rising Star Sommelier in 2024. She began her wine career at The Grey in Savannah and now hand-selects every bottle at Common Thread, favoring small, family-owned producers and organic and biodynamic farming. She also oversees the wine lists at Strange Bird and Wildflower Cafe and runs a local wine club.

Casa Mono, a Gramercy Park cornerstone for Spanish cuisine, has held a Michelin star since 2009 and earned a three-star review from The New York Times in 2015. Executive Chef Jonathan Melendez leads the kitchen. Beverage Director Andrew Bridges oversees a Spain-focused list of roughly 600 wines, including more than 70 Sherries, that has earned Wine Spectator's Best of Award of Excellence since 2008.

East Village favorite Nudibranch pairs Korean and Spanish flavors and was named one of Esquire's best new restaurants in America in 2022. Chef Jeffrey Kim has cooked at Momofuku Ssäm Bar, Jua, and in the kitchens of Eleven Madison Park and El Celler de Can Roca in Spain. Wine Director Sammi Schachter, previously head sommelier at the Bushwick natural wine bar Cherry on Top, oversees a 100-label list that earned a Wine Spectator Award of Excellence and was singled out for its strength in wines of France and the Iberian Peninsula.

The jury will include panel chair Lucas Paya (Sommelier, Certified Sherry Wine Educator, and Author), Pascaline Lepeltier (Master Sommelier and Owner of Chambers), Eric Bolyard (Chef and Partner of La Compagnie), Scott Carney (Master Sommelier and Director of Wine Education at the Institute of Culinary Education), and Will Blunt (Managing Partner of StarChefs).

The winning team will receive an all-expenses-paid trip to Jerez in June 2027 to compete against seven other nations in the [International Grand Final of Copa Jerez XII](#), the largest gastronomic congress dedicated to Sherry.

PRESS CONTACT

For more information, to receive an invitation to the live finals on November 3, or to request images, please contact Nicole Borden at nicole@starchefs.com.

ABOUT COPA JEREZ

Copa Jerez is a biennial international culinary competition organized by the Regulatory Council of the Denominations of Origin "Jerez-Xérès-Sherry" and "Manzanilla-Sanlúcar de Barrameda" and the Federation of Wineries of the Marco de Jerez (FEDEJEREZ). The competition challenges chef and

sommelier teams to explore Sherry's versatility by creating a three-course menu paired with a range of Sherry wines. Eight countries take part: Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Mexico, the

Netherlands, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Each country holds a national final to select its top team, and the finalists then compete on stage at the international final in Jerez.

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