

CRAZIES AWARDS SELECTION & PROCESS

The mission of the CRAZIES Awards is to recognize exceptional talent and achievement in the Connecticut hospitality industry each year. The process, structure, and procedure for selecting nominees and award winners is updated each year to protect the prestige and value of the awards.

While the Connecticut Restaurant Association team and Board of Directors help oversee the awards process, we do not participate in the voting for or selection of winners or finalists. The overall integrity of the awards process is managed by the staff at the Connecticut Restaurant Association, led by their President & CEO. This includes ensuring that nominees and winners are representative of the hospitality landscape from across all parts of Connecticut.

NOMINATING PANEL

The CRAZIES Nominating Panel includes invited members of Connecticut's media community in print journalism, radio, broadcast television, and digital media, who demonstrate a dedicated and knowledgeable background in the state's restaurant, food service and hospitality industry. The panel consists of approximately 40 members each year. All members of the committee must disclose their relationships with specific businesses and make sure to not influence their vote or recommendations based on those relationships.

It is expected that participating panel members have and maintain expertise on dining trends, food innovations, hospitality business operations, service and culinary experience. They are well-versed on past, present, and upcoming hospitality industry owners, staff and businesses. It is expected that panelists dine out at restaurants across the state during the nomination and judging process.

AWARDS TIMELINE

PUBLIC NOMINATION

The general public will be able to submit entries online for their favorite restaurant, chef, caterer, server, bartender and more, from mid-August to mid-September.

CHEF/INDUSTRY LEADER NOMINATING PROCESS

In addition to the public nomination, a group of more than 50 chefs, restaurateurs and past winners submit nominees to the association. This group cannot submit their own businesses, employees and/or other partner businesses.

NOMINATING PANEL SUBMISSION

The Nominating Panel submits their list of nominees for each category during the month of September.

NOMINATING PANEL LUNCHEON & CONFERENCE CALL

Submissions are reviewed and collected by the CRA from the public nominations, chef/industry leader nominations and the Nominating Panel. In early September, the panel meets in person to discuss the results of each of these and uses the luncheon, as well as a conference call in

September, to finalize the list of nominees and select the awards winners for Restaurateur of the Year and Hospitality Hall of Fame.

CRAZIES KICKOFF PARTY

In September, the Connecticut Restaurant Association hosts a special kickoff event to announce the finalists and the preselected award winners (Restaurateur/Hall of Fame) for the upcoming Gala.

PUBLIC VOTING

Following the Kickoff Party, public voting begins giving the general public a chance to vote for their favorite finalists in each category. The People's Choice Award is the overall winner exclusively from the voting public.

NOMINATING PANEL FINAL VOTE

In mid-to-late November, the Nominating Panel is asked to cast their final vote from the full list of finalists that was announced at the Kick Off Party.

AWARD WINNER SELECTED & ANNOUNCED

Prior to the Gala, the association collects the final results from the Public Voting and Nominating Panel final vote to determine the winners of each category. Only the association is aware of the awards winners, which are then announced live on stage during the ceremony and released to media following the gala.

ELIGIBILITY

All Connecticut restaurants, caterers, private event venues, vendors and individuals who meet the requirements of the category are eligible to be nominated each year.

**NOMINEES & WINNERS DON'T NEED TO BE MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION TO BE ELIGIBLE AND MEMBERSHIP STATUS IS NOT USED IN CONSIDERATION OF FINALISTS/WINNERS*

RECONSIDERATION & REVOCATION OF FINALISTS AND/OR AWARD WINNERS

The CRAZIES Awards reserves the right to reconsider and/or revoke any awards should circumstances of information arise that the association was not aware of at the time of judging and/or awarding, or based on any situations that becomes known after the judging commenced.

The nominating panel has policies and procedures to follow in these circumstances which take into consideration the eligibility requirements, judging criteria, ethical conduct and the totality of factual information on the panel has access to about the candidates being considered or reconsidered.

AWARD CATEGORIES

Restaurateur of the Year:

- A working restaurateur who sets high standards in restaurant operations and entrepreneurship and serves as an inspiration to other food service professionals.
- Candidate must be a hands-on operator, face of the restaurant (owner or managing partner).
- Candidate should display a reputation of giving back to the community such as through philanthropy or community service

Connecticut Hospitality Hall of Fame:

- Restaurant must have been in business for a minimum of 25 years.
- Candidate should be widely known as an “institution” throughout Connecticut.
- Candidate should display a reputation of giving back to the community and supporting the industry.
- Candidate must show high standards of hospitality and service.

Chef of the Year:

- Candidate is a working chef in Connecticut whose career has set new or consistent industry standards.
- A chef who has supported and served as inspiration to other food professionals.
- Candidate who has set standards for customer service and exemplifies the essence of hospitality.

Pastry Chef of the Year:

- Candidate should be a working pastry chef or baker in Connecticut whose career has set new or consistent industry standards.
- A pastry chef or baker who has supported and served as an inspiration to other food professionals.
- Candidate who has set standards for customer service and exemplifies the essence of hospitality.

Bar & Beverage Team of the Year

- A team that delivers exceptional service with professionalism, expert knowledge of cocktails, beverages, and pairing options, guiding guests to memorable and personalized experiences.
- Candidate demonstrates outstanding teamwork through flawless coordination, mutual respect, and a unified commitment to excellence behind the bar.
- Candidate maintains a positive, professional image and is widely respected, recognized by both guests and industry peers for consistently high standards in hospitality and beverage service.

Service Team of the Year

- A team that delivers outstanding service with professionalism, warmth, and attention to detail, combining deep menu knowledge and the ability to confidently guide guests through food and beverage choices.
- Candidate exemplifies exceptional teamwork through seamless coordination, mutual respect, and a shared commitment to delivering a superior guest experience.
- Candidate maintains a positive, professional image and is widely respected, recognized by both guests and industry peers for consistently high standards in hospitality and service.

Friend of the Industry

- An individual and/or organization that works to protect our industry and provide added support for its future growth.

Vendor of the Year

- An industry supplier with a proven reputation for quality and excellence.
- Candidate should display a reputation of giving back to the community and supporting the industry.

Caterer of the Year

- Candidate demonstrates high standards of hospitality and service.
- Candidate sets a standard for professionalism and excellence in the service industry.
- A caterer can be loosely defined as a business providing food services at a remote site or special event.

People's Choice

- A favorite dining establishment in Connecticut, across any genre of food or style of dining that is voted and selected by the general public.

Restaurant Newcomer

- Restaurant must be open for less than 2 years & opened before August 1 of the current year.
- Candidate displays excellence in food, beverage and atmosphere.
- Candidate is likely to make an impact in Connecticut's restaurant industry.

Restaurant of the Year: (One from Each County & Overall Winner)

- A restaurant that consistently demonstrates quality and excellence in food, service and atmosphere.
- Candidate excels in providing world-class service to customers and guests.
- Candidate should display a reputation of giving back to the community such as through philanthropy or community service.