

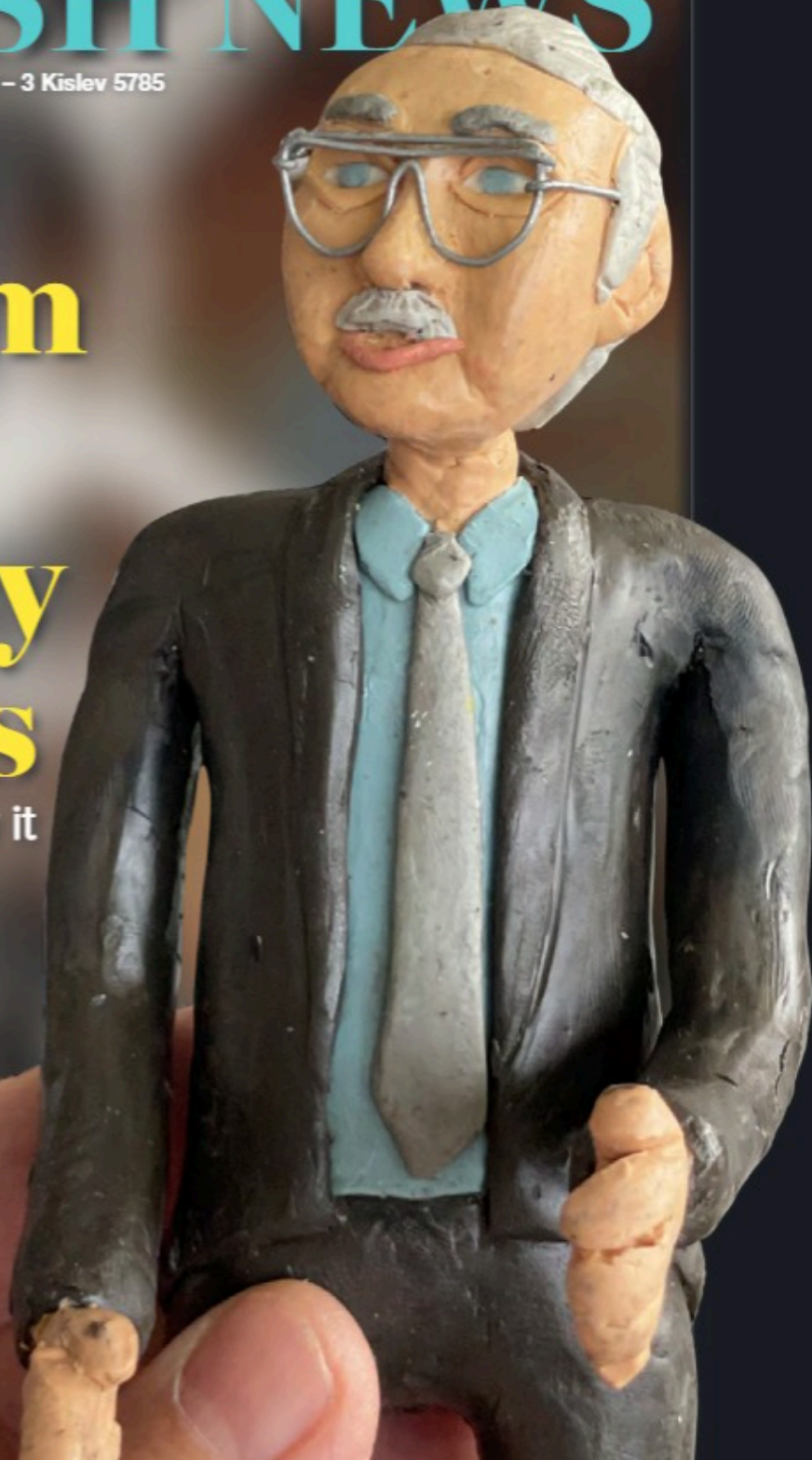
THE DETROIT
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New Film
Fetes
Culinary
Masters

Our Danny Raskin knew it
all along, Detroit is
"The City of Chefs."

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A Film Tribute to Our

Culinary Legends



Chef Keith Famle,
Certified Master Chef
Jeff Gabriel, Certified
Master Chef Shawn
Loving and Certified
Master Chef Dan
Hugeller



Danny Raskin knew it all along, Detroit is “The City of Chefs.”

ESTHER ALLWEISS INGBER CONTRIBUTING WRITER

PHOTOGRAPHY BY VISIONALIST ENTERTAINMENT PRODUCTIONS

When Detroiters want someone else to do the cooking, the restaurant options in the Metro area can seem almost overwhelming. The dining scene in cities like Chicago, New York, Los Angeles and Miami have nothing on Detroit, “one of the most diverse and well-rounded culinary cities in the nation,” according to chef-turned-filmmaker Keith Famie. “Think about it. There is nothing you can’t find here.”

He treats every opportunity to dine in one of Metropolitan Detroit’s many eateries “like an adventure of epicurean exploration.”

When it comes to cuisine, “I’m talking about the real deal from someone’s homeland, just like there is a Mama making it right in her own kitchen,” Famie said. “From Indian, Vietnamese, Italian, Polish, Mexican to Middle Eastern — Metro Detroit has it all.”

DETROIT: THE CITY OF CHEFS

Visionalist Entertainment Productions (VEP), Famie’s production company, will premiere its newest documentary, *Detroit: The City of Chefs*, on the evening of Dec. 9, at Emagine Novi (see information at the bottom of page 14). Famie added the words “Dedicated, Daring, Defiant” as the film’s tagline, “because I feel they truly define our chef community.” The event will benefit five Michigan charities.

The film delves into Detroit’s historical food traditions since 1900 and notes the influence of immigrant European chefs who helped mold a generation of top culinary performers, including Famie. The film also includes a shout-out to legendary *Detroit Jewish News* columnist and food aficionado, the late Danny Raskin. Famie considered Danny a dear friend. “We went way back to my earliest days as a chef at the Benchmark Restaurant in the Michigan Inn in the early 1980s,” Famie said.

Certified Master Chef Brian Polcyn, friends with Famie since high school, said, “In the late 1980s and ’90s, we were prominent in the contemporary American food scene — me at Pike Street Restaurant in Pontiac and him at Les Auteurs in Royal Oak. He went on to filmmaking while I continued to build restaurants.” During his career, Polcyn has won five Restaurant of the Year honors.

Famie is well known in the Jewish community for his 2021 acclaimed documentary film *Shoah Ambassadors*, a film that featured Holocaust survivors educating non-Jewish teens about the Shoah. The film was shot locally, but Famie’s original plan, before COVID interceded, was to film teens and survivors visiting concentration camps and the Warsaw Ghetto in Poland.

After choosing various topics for his company’s 30 documentaries to date, Famie finally is focusing on his former profession. “Keith (Famie) is a very talented filmmaker in telling peoples’ stories,” said Chef Jimmy Schmidt, perhaps best known for his Rattlesnake Club near today’s Detroit River Walk (1988-2024). “He is an accomplished chef and knows the ins and outs of the restaurant business.”

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OUR COMMUNITY
ON THE COVER



Late restaurateur Joe Muer

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A LONG TIME IN THE MAKING

"I have talked about telling this story for the last 25 years," Famie said. He finally got started in May 2023, with "the support of the hospitality community."

The film's participating chefs were drawn from Famie's professional and personal contacts. "They understand the significance of our culinary heritage here in Detroit and seem to be thrilled the story is being told," he said.

Noting that restaurateur Joe Muer passed away after the documentary was made, Famie said. "We are so fortunate that *Detroit: The City of Chefs* includes a conversation with Joe, who shared so much wisdom as one of the oldest restaurant families in our city."

For insiders like Famie, the restaurant communi-

ty "is like being a part of a secret society. Chefs and restaurant staff work hard. The hours are long, and the work is very demanding, both physically and mentally. You spend so much time with those you work with, focusing on the same goal of excellence, and they really become as close to you as your own family members ... and in some ways closer."

The documentary shows chefs and their assistants cooking and assembling all manner of delicious food. We hear the sizzle and watch the smoke of searing steaks and chops. We delight in the artistic plating of entrees and desserts. Experiencing the behind-the-scenes magic might bring to mind *The Bear*, the popular, Emmy Award-winning restaurant series streaming on Hulu.

Still, at the heart of the film are the memories of the Detroit-based chefs. They are celebrated prac-

titutors of continental cuisine, a fine-dining style of cooking developed in France and other parts of Europe.

CHEF'S INSPIRATIONS

Certified Executive Chef Paul Grosz, whose Cuisine restaurant is in Midtown Detroit, said he was just out of high school in the early 1980s when he worked with Famie. "Chef Keith introduced me to the world of French cooking, with the ingredients and the techniques he learned from chefs here in Detroit."

Wanting to further his knowledge about French cuisine, Grosz studied at the famed Le Cordon Bleu cooking school in Paris. Afterward, he worked in several three-star French restaurants.

"I was excited to bring back what I learned

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to Detroit because we have a rich history of fine dining with French techniques,” Grosz said. “At Cuisine, you’ll see items on the menu that have techniques that date back hundreds of years. I use contemporary ingredients and flavor combinations with these treasured techniques.”

Chef Mary Brady of Diamond Jim Brady Bistro in Novi said, “American chef Julia Child, who I had the pleasure of meeting, was an inspiration to me. She taught us French cooking, in an approachable style.”

Brady was the second woman in the state of Michigan to become a Certified Executive Chef through the American Culinary Federation (ACF). Now, she mentors other woman chefs.

When Schmidt traveled to France, he “fell in love with food and wine,” taking classes with Madeleine Kamman at University of Aix en Provence. He followed Kamman (“my cooking mother”) to a Boston restaurant.

The London Chop House, a landmark restaurant in Downtown Detroit for decades, is where Schmidt landed his first job as an executive chef.

“It was a vibrant economy, and executives lived life well — it was the three-martini era,” recalled Schmidt, who provided a lot of history for the film. “People were spending \$80-\$100 for lunch between 1977-85 at The Chop.”

After a much-honored cooking career, Schmidt does pop-up dinners with his wife, and he recently launched a company that develops the technology for creating new products to boost food nutrition.

THE CORE OF THE FILM

Famie said the core of his film is remembering “the early immigrant chefs who brought with them from their homelands their style of cooking, as well as a professional, highly intensive expectation of kitchen leadership.”

Certified Master Chef Milos Cielka in the film was the chef-partner at the late, great Golden Mushroom

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Certified Executive Chef Paul Grosz with staff at Cuisine



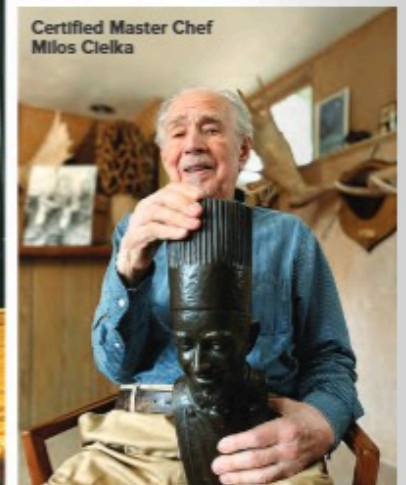
An array of chefs: Greg Upsure, Keith Famie, Steve Allen, Milos Cielka and Brian Polcyn.



Chef Jimmy Schmidt of the former Rattlesnake Club



Chef Takashi Yagihashi of the former Tribute restaurant



Certified Master Chef Milos Cielka

OUR COMMUNITY

ON THE COVER

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Southfield. He still takes pride in his strict reputation.

"Milos is brilliant and has his stamp on so many in the master chef class," Schmidt said. The film explores the lives of Chefs Milos, Duglass (Douglas Grech) of Restaurant Duglass in Southfield and the late Yvonne Gill of the Money Tree in Downtown Detroit.

In the documentary, "We hear from chefs who worked for these early, very complicated, and often off-the-rails, leaders in the kitchen," Famie said. Besides teaching them cooking, the students of these masters learned the importance of a strong work ethic and striving for excellence.

Young cooks working in the 1970s for these European chefs knew to "keep your head down, mouth shut and station clean," Famie said. "If you were scheduled at 3 o'clock, you knew you'd better be there at 2:30. If your shifts ended at 11 p.m., you knew to plan on staying until midnight (and off the clock) to clean."

Famie learned that ADD (attention-deficit disorder) "runs through the veins of so many people who work in the kitchen. You will hear

chefs refer to this as their superpower." Having ADD apparently helps them perform at the highest level of achievement during their typically demanding days.

"Back in the 1970s, ADD was not understood, and that was mixed with a hard-partying lifestyle," Famie said. "I never went to college and can only imagine where I'd be if I had not found a passion for cooking with Chef Duglass when I was 17."

Turning to the alcohol side of the business, the film features Master Sommelier Madeline Triffon, long known as "Detroit's first lady of wine," from the London Chop House, and Ed Jonna, founder of the Merchant of Vino wine stores. They, along with chefs, talk about wine dinners and how Jonna brought wine makers from around the world to eat in Detroit restaurants.

"In many ways, Jonna's ambassadorship helped build a reputation for the Detroit chefs through these chef/wine dinners," Famie said.

STOP-MOTION ANIMATION

The documentary also features stop-motion animation

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How to Purchase Tickets General admission tickets (\$20) remain for the premiere of Visionalist Entertainment Production's new documentary, *Detroit: The City of Chefs* (1 hour, 35 mins). The oral and visual history of iconic Detroit restaurants, drawing upon the remembrances of celebrated chefs, will be shown at staggered times — 7:15, 7:30 and 7:45 p.m. — on Monday, Dec. 9, at Imagine Novi movie theater, 44425 W. 12 Mile Road in Novi.

For tickets, visit www.imagine-entertainment.com/movies/detroit-the-city-of-chefs. Theater information: (248) 468-2990.





etroit
CITY OF
CHEFS



A Claymation Image of the late Detroit Jewish News food writer Danny Raskin, who is noted in the film





Master Sommelier
Madeline Triffon

OUR COMMUNITY ON THE COVER

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tion animation through a collaboration with the College for Creative Studies in Detroit. Besides depicting chefs, look-alike Claymation puppets were made of the late *Detroit Jewish News* food writer Danny Raskin and another reviewer for several publications, the late Molly Abraham. They are both included in a section of the film about food/restaurant critics.

"At the same time these chefs were blazing new styles of cooking in their kitchens, the local food writers were driving the excitement for trying these dining experiences," Famie said.

Singer/songwriter Jill Jack, one of his long-time friends, contributed an original theme song for the film, *The Legends of the Stove*.

"When I know I need a certain musical story direction, I reach out to her and she hits it out of the park every time," Famie said.

The documentary touches on the history of the culinary arts programs at Schoolcraft College in Livonia and the Orchard Ridge campus of Oakland Community College in Farmington Hills. The programs have turned out hundreds of successful chefs in the Detroit area. Chefs Brady, Grosz and Polcyn from the film are instructors working at Schoolcraft.

Famie said he's proud of how Michigan chefs and the restaurant community at large have played an important role for decades in supporting charitable events.

"Chefs are often called upon to donate their food and hard work — after already working 60-70 hours a week — to participate at charitable events to raise money for worthy causes," he said.

AN EVENING TO REMEMBER

The *Detroit: The City of Chefs* event will assist five Michigan charities, including The Rainbow Connection, Gilda's Club Metro Detroit, Rising Stars Academy, New Day Foundation for Families and Community Living Centers.

Premiere guests will have an opportunity to stroll through a "Chef Alley," displays of local products and industry information.

In addition, some of the film's featured chefs — Certified Executive Chef Kelli Lewton, Polcyn, Schmidt and Brady — will be signing copies of their books.

Some of Famie's favorite restaurants and their chefs from yesteryear include

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Keith Famie, at right, with
Schoolcraft Culinary Arts
students and video crew

SCHOOLCRAFT COLLEGE



PECAN MUSTARD RUBBED SALMON PLATTER

CREATED BY CERTIFIED EXECUTIVE CHEF KELLI LEWTON OF TWO UNIQUE CATERING

Yield 10 servings

Ingredients

Non-stick spray

3 tablespoons Dijon mustard

2 tablespoons coarse mustard

2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

2 tablespoons of maple syrup

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup panko breadcrumbs

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup finely chopped pecans

1 tablespoon orange zest

1 tablespoon finely chopped parsley

1 teaspoon sea salt, divided

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, divided

10 (4-ounce) salmon fillets

1 lemon, sliced into wedges for serving (optional)

Garnish

1 orange sliced in circles

A bouquet of herbs such as rosemary

Directions

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Line a large sheet pan with foil and spray with nonstick spray. In a small bowl combine mustards, melted butter and syrup. In a second bowl combine panko, pecans, orange zest, parsley, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt and $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon of pepper. Place salmon on a work surface and season fillets with remaining $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt and $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon black pepper. Brush or spoon mustard mixture over salmon fillets, press salmon fillets into panko mixture and place an inch apart on the prepared sheet pan. Lightly spray salmon with non-stick spray. Bake for 12 to 15 minutes until the salmon is firm to touch. Let salmon rest for 5 minutes. Line up on a serving platter and garnish with sliced orange wheels in a row on the outer perimeter of the platter and nestle in the bouquet of herbs. Serve lemon wedges alongside if using.

Chef's Notes

You can also roast the salmon as a whole side versus individual fillets. Simply place roasted salmon on a large serving platter and serve with a small spatula, allowing guests to help themselves by cutting into the side.

Certified Master Chef Milos Cielka (third from left) with some of his former chef proteges



OUR COMMUNITY ON THE COVER

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Certified Master Chef Ed Janos cooking at TooChez, Takashi Yagihashi at Tribute, Polcyn at Pike Street, Rick Halberg at Emily's and Certified Master Chef Shawn Loving at Loving Spoonful (now executive chef at Detroit Athletic Club). "I could honestly go on and on," he said. "Each one of these chefs has a distinctive style."

Recognizing restaurant trends come and go, Famie said, "There will be fads and there will be kitchens that inspire. We are part of a global community, and nothing is out of reach through social media, the internet or a plane ride. So, a chef in New York City or Los Angeles may inspire a creation. But I'm sure chefs in our community inspire others around the country as well."

He's emphatic on the point that "good cooking must always be based on the teachings and techniques of those great chefs who came before us." 🍴

Famie and his team at Visionalist Entertainment Productions are working on the second episode of Detroit's historic chef story for next year. The film will explore today's current chef leaders, the history of the James Beard Award, culinary competitions and Michigan's Master Chefs.



MOREL MUSHROOM & WILD RAMP BLINI

CREATED BY CHEF JIMMY SCHMIDT

Makes 4 servings

Ingredients

4 Rye Blini (recipe follows)

1 tablespoon unsalted butter

8 ounces fresh morel mushrooms, cleaned and stems trimmed as necessary

16 small ramps, pull off coarse outer skin, trim roots and rinse as necessary

Porcini sea salt

ground Tellicherry black pepper

1 tablespoon snipped fresh chives

2 tablespoons creme fraiche

2 tablespoons Purple Haze goat cheese

Directions

Position the cooked blini in the center of each warm serving plate. In a medium skillet over high heat, add the butter, cooking until it starts to brown. Add the morels, cooking until seared on all sides, about 3 minutes. Add the ramps, cooking until wilted and tender, about 1 minute. Add the chives. Season to taste with Porcini salt and black pepper. Remove from the heat. Position the morels atop the blini. Artistically position



The Chef's Production Company

Keith Famie is the founder and executive producer of Wixom-based Visionalist Entertainment Productions (VEP). Since 2006, Famie and his team have produced documentaries for corporate clients and nonprofits, with some of the films airing locally on TV stations WDIV, WXYZ and public broadcasting channel WTVS.

"My focus has always been to tell stories that inspire, educate and often help people better understand their own lives and the lives of others," Famie said.

VEP brings a local approach to the topics explored by the inclusion of Detroiters. Along the way, the company has received 23 Michigan Emmy Awards in different categories. The Emmy-winning documentaries include *Shoah Ambassadors* (2021), a nationally recognized film about the Holocaust that features nine Holocaust survivors in Michigan; *Embrace of Aging: The Female Perspective of Growing Old* (2014), featuring individuals on the front lines of Alzheimer's and dementia and highlighting several deeply personal stories from the Jewish community, and several "Our Story" films about Detroit's different ethnic communities, starting with Italian in 2006.

Detroit: The City of Chefs will be shown on WTVS at 9 p.m. Dec. 12. 📺



George Vutetakis, who is included in the documentary, was chef at the former Inn Season Cafe, a vegetarian restaurant.

the ramps atop the morels. In a small bowl, combine the creme fraiche and goat cheese. Spoon the creme fraiche atop the ramps. Serve.

TRICKS OF THE TRADE: Do not refrigerate your blini batter as the yeast leavening effect will decrease, resulting in dense texture.

RYE BLINI

CREATED BY CHEF JIMMY SCHMIDT
Makes 12 four-inch blini

Ingredients

1½ cups warm milk (at about 110 degrees F)
1 package dry yeast
1 teaspoon sugar
1 cup all-purpose flour
1 cup Bluebird Grain Farms rye flour
3 large egg yolks
4 ounces unsalted butter at room temperature
½ cup heavy cream
½ teaspoon sea salt
2 large egg whites

Directions

In a medium bowl, combine the milk, yeast and sugar. Allow to develop until foamy, about 10 minutes. Whisk in the flours. Whisk in 4 tablespoons of the butter. Whisk in the egg yolks. Allow to rise, covered with a clean cloth, until double, about 30 minutes. In a separate bowl, whip the heavy cream until slightly thickened. Fold into the blini batter, along with the salt. In another separate bowl, whip the egg whites to soft peaks. Fold into the batter.

To cook: Melt 1 tablespoon of the butter in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add ¼ cup of the batter to form a blini, repeating until your pan is utilized. Cook until golden, indicated by bubbles rising to the uncooked surface of the blini, about 2 minutes. Turn it over and cook until done, about 1 minute. Transfer to a warm plate, keeping separate and warm in a 150 degree F oven, if necessary. Repeat with the remaining batter. Top as you like.

WHAT IS A BLINI? Blini is a thin Russian pancake that traditionally was yeast-leavened and made from oats or buckwheat, poor flours for bread making.



WHY DO THEY TASTE SO GOOD? The flavor from the yeast activity develops the blini's unique taste. This recipe is enriched with butter and cream and becomes lighter due to the air captured in the whipped egg whites. The use of rye flour adds a certain unique nuttiness to the blini, too.

For more recipes from the master chefs from *Detroit: The City of Chefs*, visit thejewtshnews.com.