



*Detroit*

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THE CITY OF

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**CHEFS**

Dedicated × Daring × Defiant

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VISIONALIST  
ENTERTAINMENT PRODUCTIONS

# Sunday Free Press

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2024 | [FREEP.COM](http://FREEP.COM)

PA



**Neal Rubin**  
Columnist  
Detroit Free Press  
USA TODAY NETWORK

## Film traces Detroit's restaurant resurgence to stars of the 1980s

**Neal Rubin**  
Detroit Free Press  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Maybe you've watched "The Bear," the FX series about a Chicago restaurant where the chefs' average decibel level is a shout. Or you've seen anything with Gordon Ramsay and thought, "Jeez, that's intense."

Compared to the kitchens he learned in, says Keith Famie, "That's kindergarten."

And that's not a complaint. It's more of an ode, really, to an era that couldn't be repeated today, but in Famie's telling, helped turn Detroit into the restaurant destination it has become.

Famie, 64, was part of a bold, hot generation of chefs who made names for themselves in the city in the 1980s and '90s. Now he's a documentary filmmaker, doing battle with lighting and finances and deadlines while swatting down occasional thoughts of a return to his old job.

His latest work, "Detroit: The City of Chefs," debuts on multiple screens Monday night at the Emagine Theatre Novi, then airs on WTVS-TV at 9 p.m. Thursday. It's built around history, interviews and even clay representations of the chefs, hosts and writers who made the era something worth commemorating.

"This one's a little personal," Famie says, "because I lived it."

For those who didn't — for those who don't remember the buzz around the opening of a new restaurant from chefs like Jimmy Schmidt of the Rattlesnake Club, Brian Polcyn of Five Lakes Grill, Shawn Loving of Loving Spoonful or Mary Brady of Diamond Jim Brady's — he says it's relevant anyway.

Their influence, he contends, can be felt and tasted throughout southeast Michigan today, and it's the atmosphere they helped create that keeps drawing talent to what used to be a culinary flyover.

See RUBIN, Page 10A



**Chef Keith Famie demonstrates how he prepares a dish.** PHOTO PROVIDED BY KEITH FAMIE

## Rubin

Continued from Page 4A

The story starts, as most do, with immigrants, bringing the tastes and flair of their cultures to Detroit. It continues with what he considers the culinary Big Three.

They were the professionals, he says, who raised the game of everyone around them: Milos Cihelka from Czechoslovakia, best known for the Golden Mushroom in Southfield, who's in the film; French-Canadian Douglas Grech, known as "Chef Duglass, Duglass"; and New Zealander Yvonne Gill.

Cihelka, now 94, was the general, or maybe more accurately the drill sergeant.

"It was very militaristic," Famie says. "But you know what? Maybe that structure was something we needed."

### A calling, and a connection

Famie barely made it through Farmington High School. If not for a counselor who suggested the Southwest Oakland Vocational School in Walled Lake, he probably would have joined the military, an honorable step but not one that would have put him behind a camera decades later.

"I was a dishwasher at a Chinese restaurant," he says. "I thought, 'I like to eat. How hard can this be?'"

Exceedingly, it turned out. But it was also mesmerizing.

His classmates included Polcyn, Marcus Haight and Jeff Baldwin, who all became renowned chefs or educators or both. "We were misfits. Real misfits," he says, until they found their calling.

As for Famie, he found more than that. His late father, a Ford engineer, "was always disappointed in me," he says.

Then came the night his first restaurant opened. Raphael's at the Sheraton Oaks Novi Hotel was small, only 42 seats, but it was packed, and when the 22-year-old chef walked through the dining room, the customers stood and



**Chef Milo Cihelka, of the Golden Mushroom in Southfield, sharpens his knives on May 16, 1976.**

HUGH GRANNUM/DETROIT FREE PRESS

cheered.

"It was the first time my father said he loved me and he was proud of me," Famie says.

Chalk it up to the power of food.

### Ingredients for a movie

Now comes "Detroit: The City of Chefs," with its Novi debut a fundraiser for the Rainbow Connection and four other local charities. Tickets to catch it on the big screen are \$20, and include a stroll through a Chef's Alley with vendors offering samples and authors signing cookbooks.

The movie has moments of humor, Famie says. It has stop-motion chefs, automated by students from the College for Creative Studies, clambering down a cake baked by culinary arts students from the renowned program at Schoolcraft College. It has appearances by the likes of Paul Grosz from Cuisine and Luciano DelSignore from Bacco Ristorante in Southfield, closed in March and already demolished and missed.

Jill Jack contributed a new song, "Legends of the Stove," and she blended in the three words Famie uses to define his era — daring, dedicated, defiant.

"It's not about cooking," Famie says.

Rather, it's about people and progress, and how a first wave of celebrity chefs helped create a city that's rightly celebrated for what's come next.

*Neal Rubin has reservations Sunday at one of those new Midtown restaurants that's already drawing raves. Reach him at [NRubin@freepress.com](mailto:NRubin@freepress.com).*



**Clay figurines of the chefs, hosts and writers who made the Chef Keith Famie's filming era something worth commemorating are assembled as a group.**

PHOTO PROVIDED BY KEITH FAMIE



# Detroit Free Press

DINING

## Documentary on Detroit chefs premieres: Where to watch



**Susan Selasky**

Detroit Free Press

A history of Detroit chefs and culinary scene chronicled on film will be front and center on the big screen as the highly anticipated, "Detroit: The City of Chefs," premieres.

On Monday, the documentary film detailing decades of Detroit's culinary heritage and landscape, premieres at the Emagine Theatre in Novi, 44425 West 12 Mile Road.

The film from Keith Famie, a local filmmaker and chef, has showing times on Monday at 7:15 p.m., 7:30 p.m. and 7:45 p.m. General admissions tickets are \$20 each.

Famie's 1 hour, 35-minute documentary film chronicles and is a deep look into the Detroit's culinary world through interviews with notable metro Detroit chefs, restaurants and the hospitality industry. The documentary covers several decades starting from the 1950s and 1960s to the present day.



The late restaurateur Joe Muer Jr., in the documentary "Detroit: The City of Chefs." *Provided By Keith Famie*

The film includes interviews with prominent metro Detroit restaurateurs, including the late Joe Muer Jr. of Joe Muer restaurants and Joe Vicari of the Joe Vicari Restaurant Group with two dozen restaurants under its umbrella including the Andiamo group of restaurants.

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Keith Famie (L) Certified Master Chef Jeff Gabriel, Certified Master Chef Shawn Loving, Certified Master Chef Dan HugelierT appear in the documentary "Detroit: The City of Chefs. *Provided By Keith Famie*

Featured in the film are longtime and prominent chefs including Brian Polcyn, Shawn Loving and Paul Grosz.

"I've been wanting to tell this story for 20 years," Famie told the Free Press in 2023 announcing the film production. "These were the guys that were the hot chefs in the '80s and '90s."

Those interviewed for the film include both past and present culinarians. They are some of Detroit's most recognizable chefs who molded metro Detroit's culinary scene decades ago as well chefs and restaurant owners who are shaping it today.

Many of those chefs worked with and learned from well-known European chefs like Milos Cihelka from Czechoslovakia, French-Canadian chef Douglas Grech, known as Chef Duglass, and Yvonne Gill, who hailed from New Zealand, Famie said. Cihelka is known as the "godfather of chefs" in metro Detroit and is responsible for creating and founding in 1970 the Michigan Chefs de Cuisine Association, a professional organization for chefs.



Chef Milos Cihelka is considered the godfather of Detroit chefs and is featured in the documentary "Detroit: The City of Chefs." *Provided By Keith Famie*

The film also highlights the role and impact of metro Detroit's culinary arts schools including Schoolcraft College with its many master chef instructors, the culinary arts programs at Oakland Community College and Macomb Community College.

Those attending the event can stroll through a special "Chef Alley" setup that features and highlights local culinary companies and you can meet many well-known chefs featured in the film and authors including Brian Polcyn, Jimmy Schmidt, Kelli Lewton and Mary Brady who will be signing copies of their books.

And if you can't make the film at Emagine in Novi, the film airs Thursday at 9 p.m. on Detroit PBS.



## Keith Famie's documentary 'Detroit: City of Chefs' premieres next week



**Melody Baetens**

The Detroit News

Published 3:46 p.m. ET Dec. 4, 2024 | Updated 3:46 p.m. ET Dec. 4, 2024

Chefs, culinary students, restaurateurs and other players in Metro Detroit's food and hospitality industry will converge at Emagine Novi Monday for the premiere of chef Keith Famie's documentary "Detroit: City of Chefs."

The 95-minute film explores the history of chefs and restaurants in the city starting in the 1960s up until modern day. It will feature major players of the restaurant world, including Brian Polcyn, Rick Halberg, Mary Brady, Shawn Loving, Joe Muer Jr. and Michigan's first James Beard Award winner, Jimmy Schmidt.



"This a story about people," said Famie. "This is a story about our rich ethnic community. This is a story about those early trailblazing restaurateurs, chefs that set out to define who we are today as culinary heritage."

Famie, a film producer, director and chef, said "Detroit: City of Chefs" takes a deep dive into who these chefs were and how they inspired today's current generation of headline-making culinary professionals. He calls them "the brat pack" of Detroit's chef world in the late 20th century. This group worked for European chefs, learned precision in the kitchen and brought their skills back to area kitchens.

The documentary also details the importance that country club and hotel restaurants had on the dining scene, as well as the integral part Schoolcraft College and Oakland Community College's culinary programs played in the industry.



"It's really an interesting trajectory of evolution of our culinary heritage," he said.

Now that "Detroit: City of Chefs" is ready for an audience, and it will show at Emagine Novi Monday and also on Detroit PBS Dec. 12. The Monday night in-person event features "chef's alley," with a chance for the audience to meet some of the chefs in the film, get cookbooks signed and browse local vendors.

Famie's started work on his next project, a documentary film exploring the history and importance of the James Beard Awards and the Certified Master Chefs program.

*[mbaetens@detroitnews.com](mailto:mbaetens@detroitnews.com)*

## **“Detroit: The City of Chefs” premiere event**

7 p.m. Monday

Emagine Novi

44425 W. 12 Mile, Novi

\$20 for general admission tickets, \$200 for VIP

[detroitcityofchefs.com](http://detroitcityofchefs.com)

## **“Detroit: The City of Chefs”**

9 p.m. Dec. 12

PBS Detroit



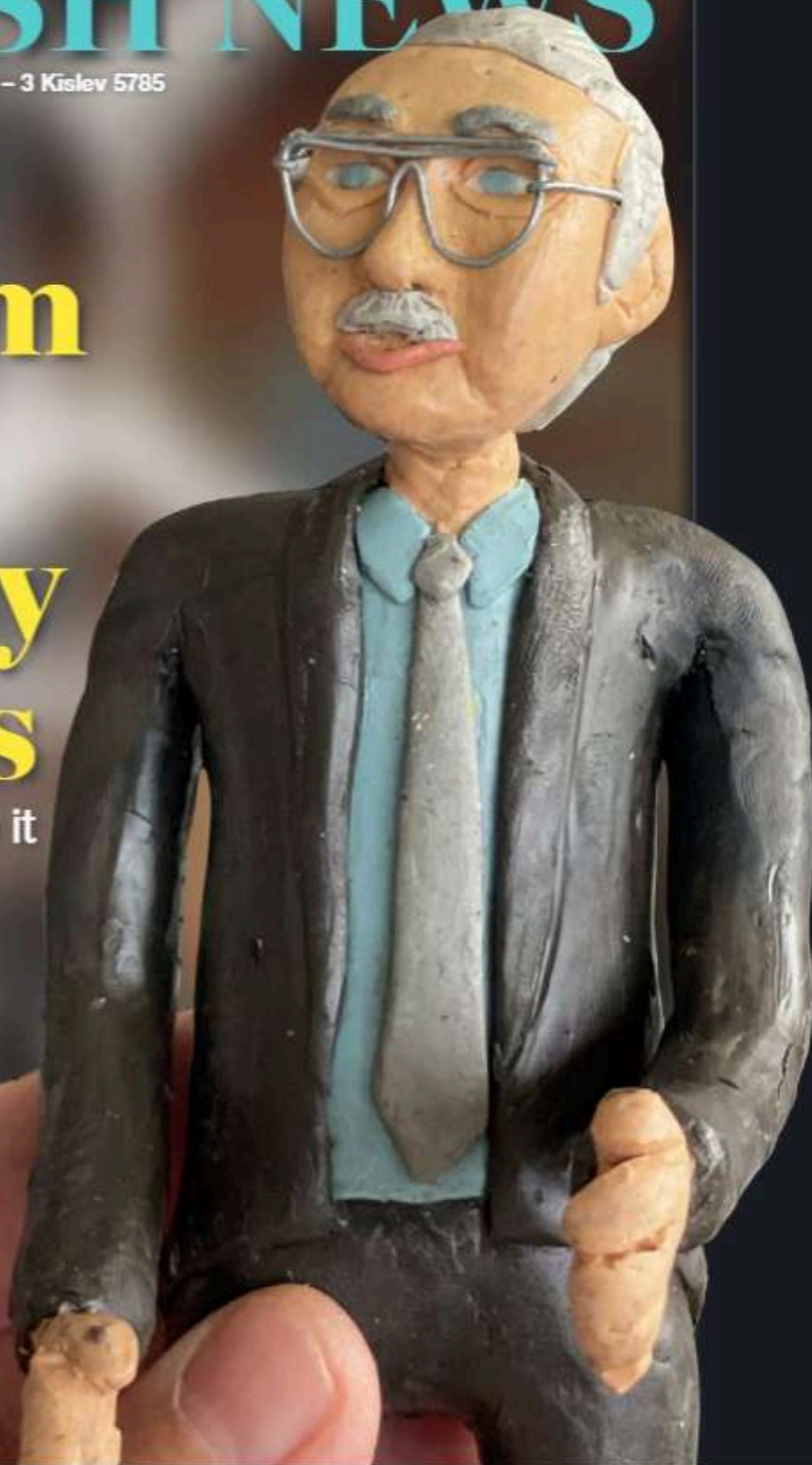
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**New Film**  
**Fetes**  
**Culinary**  
**Masters**

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

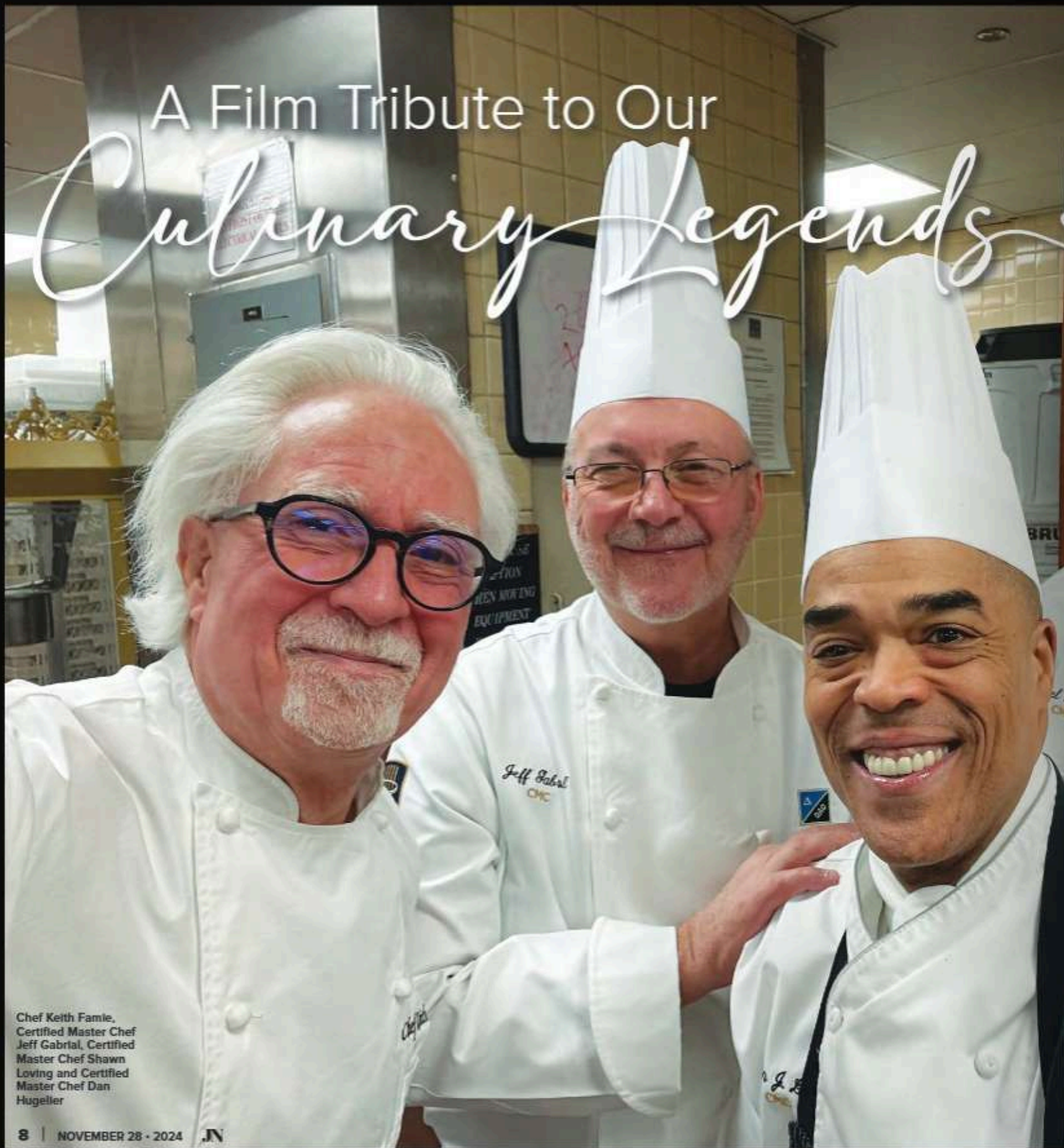
See page 8





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





## OUR COMMUNITY ON THE COVER

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

ESTHER ALLWEISS INGBER CONTRIBUTING WRITER  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY VISIONALIST ENTERTAINMENT PRODUCTIONS

**W**hen 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.”

continued on page 10



**OUR COMMUNITY**  
ON THE COVER



Late restaurateur Joe Muer

continued from page 9

**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

continued on page 12



## OUR COMMUNITY ON THE COVER

continued from page 10

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

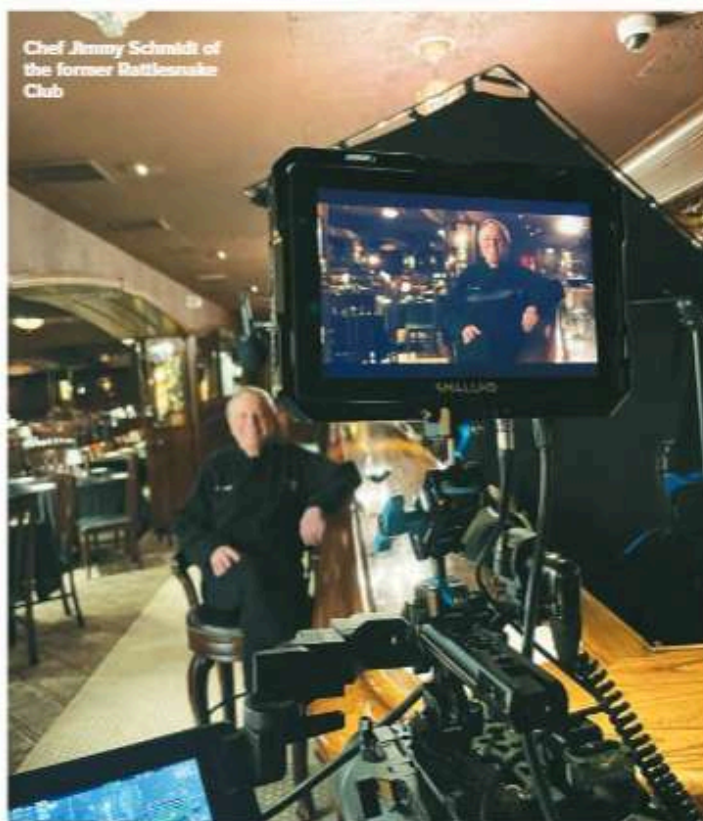
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Certified Executive Chef Paul Grosz with staff at Cuisine



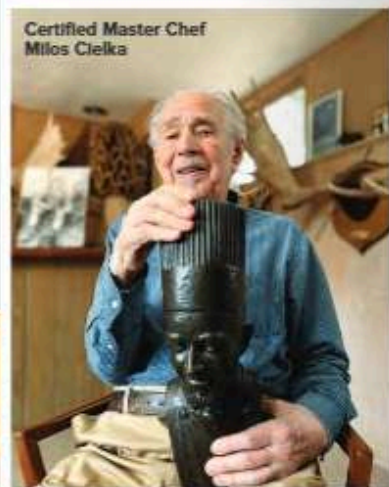
An array of chefs: Greg Upsure, Keith Famie, Steve Allen, Milos Cielka and Brian Polcyn.



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

continued from page 12

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. continued on page 16



**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](http://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

continued from page 14

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

continued on page 18



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

$\frac{1}{4}$  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

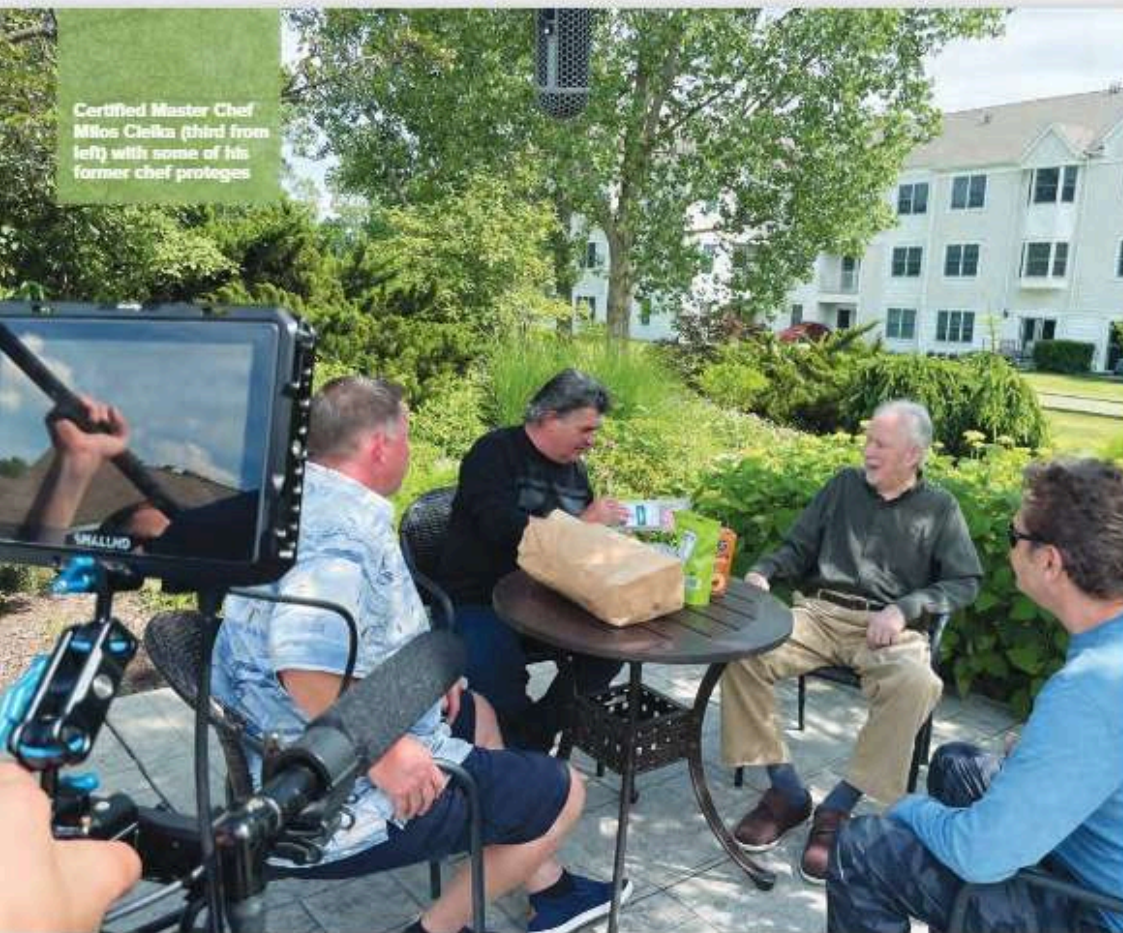
Preheat the oven to 400°F. Line a large sheet pan with foil and spray with nonstick spray. In a small bowl combine mustards, melted butter and syrup. In a second bowl combine panko, pecans, orange zest, parsley,  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt and  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon of pepper. Place salmon on a work 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

continued from page 16

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





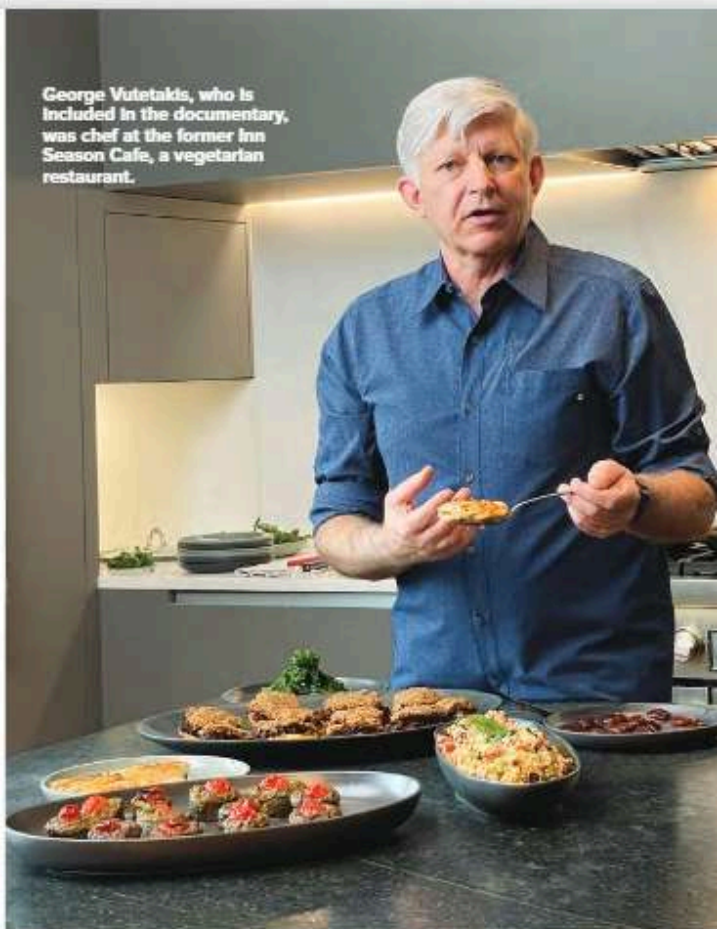
## The Chef's Production Company

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 Vuletakis, 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 [thejewishnews.com](http://thejewishnews.com).

## New film sees ex-chef turn the camera on Detroit’s dining scene

### Keith Famie comes full circle with his new documentary ‘Detroit: The City of Chefs,’ detailing our long and eclectic culinary history and the melting pot of immigrants who helped make it so

By Jim McFarlin / Nov 20, 2024



Far left: Chef Keith Famie traded in his cutlery for cameras nearly two decades ago.

What’s Keith Famie been cooking up these days?

Well, nothing in the kitchen. At least, nothing for our consumption. The Farmington Hills native once hailed as one of America’s “Best New Chefs,” who went on to operate such upscale metro eateries as Chez Raphael and Les Auteurs, traded in his cutlery for cameras nearly two decades ago.

Famie founded his own video production company, Visionalist Entertainment Productions, and has gone on to create nearly 30 longform documentary-style films, winning multiple Michigan Emmy Awards for works centering on Detroit and its history. Beyond the things we know we’re famous for — cars, music, and coneys, for example — Famie has reminded us in his previous docs that we are also the city of churches, faith, and hot rods, among other attributes.

But with his latest release, Famie appears to have come full circle.

*Detroit: The City of Chefs*, detailing our city’s long and eclectic culinary history and the melting pot of immigrants who helped make it so, airs at 9 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 12, on Detroit PBS, Famie’s broadcast partner for years. Prior to that, however, the film will be showcased in a gala Metro Detroit premiere that should excite both filmgoers and foodies alike.

*Detroit: The City of Chefs* will debut on the big screen at Novi’s Emagine Theater at 7 p.m. Monday, Dec. 9, accompanied by a variety of food and chef-related events. (Tickets are priced at \$20 for general admission,



\$200 for the VIP “Chef Extravaganza Experience.” More about that later.) But why, after all these years, has Famie now decided to make a film focusing on chefs? Was he attempting to distance himself from his previous life?

Pondering the question, Famie says he really doesn’t have a good answer. “I’ve always wanted to tell this story,” he said in a recent conversation. “I understood the importance of the story of our culinary heritage, but it just wasn’t something that was on the radar screen to do.

“Maybe in a subconscious way at 64 I was reflecting upon where I came from personally and the richness of that story, and I started seeing people like Milos [Cihelka, the master chef best known for his years at Southfield’s gone-but-not-forgotten Golden Mushroom restaurant] turning 92, other individuals falling away, I thought it was time.”

Nearly 14 months in the making, *Detroit: The City of Chefs* includes interviews with dozens of chefs, restaurateurs, and other Detroit icons of eating out. It’s surely the last visual image of our seafood fine-dining legend Joe Muer, Jr., who died Aug. 11 while the film was still in production. And because the subject was especially dear to Famie’s heart, he and his team at Visionalist Entertainment added some special garnishes.

They reached out to Detroit’s College of Creative Studies, who selected student Alexandra Martinescul to painstakingly craft 20 miniature clay likenesses of people interviewed in *City of Chefs*, which were then used in a stop-motion animation CCS created for the film. And Detroit’s timeless chanteuse, Jill Jack, was commissioned to write the doc’s original theme song, “The Legends of the Stove,” which she also performs. (The trailer for *Detroit: The City of Chefs* is available at [vimeo.com](https://vimeo.com).)



The documentary traces our city’s rich kitchen history back to the early 1900s, and shows how it was enhanced as different ethnic groups — the Italians, Poles, Irish, German, and Lebanese among them — landed in Detroit, bringing their unique cooking styles and ingredients with them. “I talk about the work ethics of the early European chefs and immigrants, and what that led to,” Famie says. “You can still see that work ethic in the great young chefs we have in Detroit today. To be a great chef, I think you have to have a little ADD.”

*City of Chefs* also explores a unique connection between our restaurant industry and auto industry. As Big Three executives traveled around the world on business, they grew accustomed to diverse menu offerings, meticulous preparation and impeccable service. They brought those expectations, and suggestions, back home with them: Detroit restaurant owners had no choice but to compete.

## Red Carpet Premiere of 'Detroit: The City of Chefs' Coming to Emagine Theatre in Novi

By R.J. King

November 12, 2024



A red carpet premiere for the Detroit PBS documentary, “Detroit: The City of Chefs,” will take place on Monday, Dec. 9, at the Emagine Theatre in Novi (44425 W. 12 Mile Road).

Produced and directed by Keith Famie and his team at Visionalist Entertainment Productions in Wixom, the film explores Detroit’s culinary heritage dating back to the early 1900s, the European culinary traditions that shaped it, and how restaurants in the region became a mecca of diverse dining destinations.

In addition, the film will explore how area restaurants were early on known for impeccable service, classic menu offerings, and iconic owners, chefs, maître d’s, and bartenders — all of whom became local celebrities in their own right.



The documentary also features stop-motion animation through a unique collaboration with Detroit's College for Creative Studies and an original theme song, "The Legends of the Stove," by local award-winning singer/songwriter, Jill Jack.

A limited number of VIP tickets are being sold for \$200 each for the event's "Chef Extravaganza Celebration" which include preferred seating for the film at 7 p.m., a collector's program book, and admission to a pre-reception from 5:30 to 6:45 p.m. to meet, mix, and mingle with chefs, restaurateurs, and hospitality industry personalities.

At the same time, VIP guests can enjoy a buffet created by the chefs and students at Schoolcraft College's Culinary Arts Program and Oakland Community College's Culinary Studies Institute.

Small plates will feature tuna tartare, smoked whitefish cannoli, veal and oxtail ragout, wild mushroom and roasted autumn squash soups, beef tenderloin sliders, and more.

Desserts will include hazelnut praline tarts, chocolate Chambord cream gateau, salted caramel chouquettes, and assorted tarts, cheesecakes, and chocolates.

General admission tickets for the film premiere are \$20 each. Attendees can stroll through "Chef Alley" featuring local culinary companies such as BLiS (sauces, vinegars and maple syrups), Hope's Cookies, Natural Northern Foods (salsas and spreads), Old World Olive Co. (oils and vinegars), Stoney Creek Mushrooms, Paris Gourmet (specialty foods), Nino Salvaggio International Marketplace, Dobra (confections), Big George's Home Appliance Mart, Chef Source (specialty foods), Michigan Chefs de Cuisine, and Shifty Inc.

Chefs and local authors, including Brian Polcyn, Jimmy Schmidt, Kelli Lewton and Mary Brady, will be signing copies of their books during the premiere.

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

The documentary will debut on Detroit PBS on Thursday, Dec. 12, at 9 p.m.

Visionalist Entertainment Productions, under the direction of Producer/Director Keith Famie, has produced Emmy award-winning documentary films, as well as emotionally engaging stories for corporate clients and 501(c)3 organizations.

The entertainment company, founded in 2006, tells America's stories, and actively supports local charities by bringing their stories to life on film.

To watch the trailer, go to [detroitcityofchefs.com/#trailer](http://detroitcityofchefs.com/#trailer) and click on the titles below the video frame.

VIP tickets must be reserved and paid for by Friday, Nov. 22. To purchase VIP tickets, go to [detroitcityofchefs.com/](http://detroitcityofchefs.com/).

To purchase general admission tickets, visit [here](#).

For more information, visit [v-prod.com/](http://v-prod.com/).





# Documenting Detroit's CITY OF CHEFS

Director/producer/chef Keith Famie has spent the last nine months working on a documentary that pays tribute to Detroit's culinary past and present. Here's a peek into his process before the Detroit PBS series premieres later this year.

BY JIM MCFARLIN // PHOTOS BY JOSH SCOTT

**K** Keith Famie is really putting this 84-year-old man through his paces. It's like an acuity test for seniors.

When the gentleman begins to answer one of his questions, Famie stops him. "I'm going to ask you that question again, and mention how you got to Detroit, and why Detroit," he instructs.

Moments later, Famie breaks in again. "Just because I have a short window of time with you today, what was your first impression of Detroit?"

"Oh. I'm sorry," the gentleman replies.

"No, you're OK," Famie says, "as long as you don't mind if I stop you once in a while."

The gentleman is Sameer Eid, founder and owner since 1971 of Birmingham's Phoenicia restaurant, one of the longest-running and most famous Lebanese-American restaurants in metro

Detroit. While Eid's son, Samy, handles most of the business affairs now, Sameer still comes in regularly to chat with diners who have been his customers for decades. And when Famie learns Sameer arrived at the restaurant that day in his vintage white '60s Corvette convertible, he can hardly contain himself.

"Sameer, can we get you to go back out to your car, pull out of the driveway, then drive back in and park so we can see you arriving?"

Bizarre request, but Sameer graciously complies. That's because he knows Famie, the award-winning Detroit celebrity chef turned multi-Michigan Emmy Award-winning producer-director, is filming him for his upcoming series *Detroit: The City of Chefs*. The



From left: Mike Ransom and Keith Famie pose before a spread of noodles and other entrees on the set of *Detroit: The City of Chefs*. They are filming a segment inside Corktown's Ima Izakaya, where Ransom is the chef and owner.





Director of Photography and editor Brendan Martin (left) looks through the monitor at Ransom as he strains noodles on the kitchen line at Ima Izakaya.

docuseries (originally intended to be a documentary film) is set to premiere Dec. 9 at the Novi Emagine theater before airing the following night on Detroit PBS.

“You see stories like his and it gives me hope,” Famie says while savoring the sumptuous lunch Phoenicia prepared for him and his crew. “I’m 64 now and still driving this train, but he’s still relevant. And for me to be able to shine a light on individuals like Sameer, to remind future generations or even current generations of their contributions, I’m excited. He deserves this time in his life. The film focuses on young people, too, but I feel like an ambassador.”

Sameer is one of at least 60 interviewees Famie will film for his latest production, which traces and celebrates the rich history of Detroit’s culinary industry — with every ethnic group from the Italians and Polish to the Greeks and Arab Americans contributing to the city’s entrée excellence — and highlights the new generation of chefs striving to carry on our kitchen tradition.

And it’s guaranteed that every interview will be as meticulous, impassioned, and flexible as this morning’s with Sameer. That’s just who Keith Famie is.

“He’s relentless,” marvels Fred Nahhat, senior vice president for production at Detroit PBS and Famie’s broadcast partner through nearly 18 years and more than 20 televised films hailing Detroit as the home of churches, hot rods, and many things in between. “It might come from that ethos as a chef. When you think of him back in the day at Chez Raphael, Les Auteurs, and other places I wasn’t making the money to afford, that’s what he was like then.

“But I wouldn’t paint him as esoteric,” Nahhat explains. “He’s very accessible. He’s a Detroit storyteller. He’s a hard worker, innovative, and he never stops. He’s a blue-collar filmmaker, and I mean that in the best way possible. There’s nothing but honesty coming out of his projects, and that’s pretty unique. At least once a week, I tell a filmmaker who wants to get on the air here, ‘Go talk to Keith. Get some advice from him.’”

That advice might include taking an honest look at the production being developed. “I look at four things when I step into any project, and all four have to work in sync or these things collapse,” Famie explains. “Who’s going to care about it? How is it going to help somebody in some way? Where is it going to be shown, and who’s going to pay for it? If you say, ‘I’m making a film, but I’m not sure what it’s going to be,’ or you don’t have a place to air it, nobody’s going to fund it. And these things are really expensive to make.”

His long partnership with Detroit PBS helps assure potential funders that his films will be seen. But is Detroit *really* the city of chefs? Obviously, Famie thinks so: He notes that there were once more certified master chefs in



Above: Famie organized the Legends of the Stove event, which took place at the Detroit Athletic Club this past January. It featured a multigenerational cast of chefs and restaurant professionals from metro Detroit.

Michigan, 11, than anywhere else in the nation, most of them in metro Detroit. One of them, master chef Ed Janos of London Chop House and Money Tree legend, thinks it goes deeper than that.

“I didn’t realize it until I moved away,” says Janos, a Detroit native now based in Denver who stood up with Famie at his wedding. “It was just such a tight, tight culture. We weren’t afraid to share secrets and recipes and ideas with one another. It was just such a camaraderie, and I developed great friendships with fellow chefs. I’ve been fortunate to cook in many places in the U.S., and there’s not the camaraderie I experienced in Detroit.”

Famie believes there’s a direct correlation between the automotive industry and the rise of superior chefs here. “Detroit was always considered kind of a ‘flyover city,’ but auto execs

were traveling all over the world,” he says. “They may dine in downtown Chicago or New York, and their expectation level is only as high as it is for that moment. But the restaurants here deal with the same customers over and over, so the quality and consistency has to be at a very high level. I don’t want to say Detroit’s culinary community works harder than anyone else in the country, but they work damn hard.”

Between his culinary celebrity and second career in filmmaking, Famie achieved a measure of national notoriety appearing as a contestant on CBS’s *Survivor: The Australian Outback* in 2001, eventually finishing third overall. The reality series not only beat out *Friends* in its time slot but also was the highest-rated show on TV that season.

The series did elevate his national profile enough to land him a series on Food Network, *Keith Famie’s Adventures*, and shows and appearances on Detroit TV as well. But ultimately, “the *Survivor* thing put such a magnifying glass on your life and everything, I was totally fine with. ‘Let’s step behind the camera,’” Famie recalls. “I mean, when you’re on a reality show, you have to grow a very thick skin. I

enjoyed being invisible, and telling other people’s stories allowed me to do that.”

In 1998, he launched Visionalist Entertainment Productions. What’s “Visionalist” — a word he coined himself — supposed to mean? “Nobody asks me that anymore,” Famie says with a smile. “But there’s a story behind it. Years ago, I read a saying: ‘To dream is to fantasize; to visualize is to expect.’ The point is, you cannot do anything without visualization.

“As a chef, you walk through a market, see a cut of meat, and say, ‘I’m going to make that tonight.’ You’re already visualizing the outcome. When I created the name, people said, ‘That means nothing.’ I said, ‘It means everything.’ Sometimes with films I have to wait a long time to get just the right clip. I already know where it’s going in the film. So much of what we do in the field is about that visualization, seeing where we want to go with our project. We’re visionalists.”

And with that vision come certain guiding principles when Famie is on location. “I have a very strict narrative to my filmmaking: See it, say it; say it, see it,” he says. “If I don’t have the visuals





“HE’S RELENTLESS. IT MIGHT COME FROM THAT ETHOS AS A CHEF. WHEN YOU THINK OF HIM BACK IN THE DAY AT CHEZ RAPHAEL, LES AUTEURS, AND OTHER PLACES, ... THAT’S WHAT HE WAS LIKE THEN. BUT I WOULDN’T PAINT HIM AS ESOTERIC. HE’S VERY ACCESSIBLE. ... HE’S A DETROIT STORYTELLER. HE’S A BLUE-COLLAR FILMMAKER, AND I MEAN THAT IN THE BEST WAY POSSIBLE. THERE’S NOTHING BUT HONESTY COMING OUT OF HIS PROJECTS, AND THAT’S PRETTY UNIQUE.”

—Fred Nahhat, senior vice president for production at Detroit PBS, about Keith Famie



to tell the story, then we have to let it go. Another point I stress with my crew is, the story we’re going to tell is not always the story we’re going to tell. The film we aired last year, *Detroit: The City of Hot Rods and Muscle Cars*, ended up with a story about Parkinson’s disease because we found a woman who continued to cruise despite being in stage 4. You never know how these things will work out, so you have to be flexible.”

Famie didn’t visualize how difficult the transition from chef to cinema would be. “It was economic suicide, for sure,” he says, laughing now. “Everyone in my family thought I had lost my mind. Every time I would walk into an interview, someone would say, ‘Where are you cooking now? Where is your restaurant?’ I’d respond, ‘Oh, I’m producing now.’

“How do you know how to do that?” they would ask. I’d tell them, ‘I already knew how from my food things.’ It wasn’t a stretch; it was just a pivot.”

Famie pivots a lot. He’s a producer and a fundraiser, and while his director of photography,

Brendan Martin, has done the majority of editing on his recent films, Famie is part of the process. *City of Chefs* will include stop-motion animation sequences, which he commissioned, produced by students at the College for Creative Studies and scenes from the one-time Legends of the Stove charity event, which he organized, at the Detroit Athletic Club. And practically every film Famie produces is accompanied by a companion book ... which he writes. He’s a man in constant motion, which comes as no surprise to chef Brian Polcyn, Famie’s friend since high school.

“He’s always been like that ever since I can remember,” says Polcyn, a nationally known charcuterie expert whose new cookbook *Meat Pies* comes out this fall. “That’s just his personality. Even when he was a chef, he always had something else going on. I equate it to fishing on a pier: I’d have one line in the water, and he would have nine. But he seems to have found his niche, which is good.”

But why a series about chefs now, after almost

In recent years, Brendan Martin has done the majority of editing on Famie’s television projects. Here, he captures close-ups of signature dishes at Ima Izakaya, including ramen and tuna tartare.

20 years of focusing on so many other subjects? “I don’t really have a good answer for that, other than I’ve always wanted to tell this story,” Famie muses. “I’ve always understood the importance of our culinary heritage, and I had a conversation with Brian Polcyn that made me say, ‘I think it’s time to dive into this.’ I guess maybe in a subconscious way I was reflecting upon where I came from personally. I started seeing other chefs getting older, falling off the radar screen, and thought it was time.”

He had other stories to tell first. “I’m always looking for, ‘How is this story going to affect someone? How is it going to make people think about their own lives, or gain a perspective? Change a paradigm of thinking about other people, or humanity itself?’ That’s the jazz for me.”



## DBusiness Daily Update: ‘Detroit: City of Chefs’ Offers Father’s Day Fundraising Package

By Tim Keenan and RJ King - June 5, 2024



“Detroit: The City of Chefs,” an upcoming documentary by Wixom-based filmmaker Keith Famie, is offering a fundraising Father's Day Package. // Photo courtesy of Keith Famie

### ‘Detroit: City of Chefs’ Offers Father’s Day Fundraising Package

To raise funds to help the “Detroit: The City of Chefs” documentary by Wixom-based filmmaker Keith Famie transform into a five-part series, the production team is offering a Father’s Day Package that includes:

- A “Detroit: The City of Chefs” coffee mug and a three-seasoning pack.
- A logo t-shirt.
- An embroidered logo chef’s bib apron from Bragard.

The film is scheduled to premiere on Detroit PBS on Dec. 10. A red carpet premiere also is in the works.

The Father’s Day package is available now to order or can be purchase a la carte at the film’s [online store](#).

Orders received by June 11 will arrive before Father’s Day.

To view a trailer for the program, visit [detroitcityofchefs.com](http://detroitcityofchefs.com).

## A La Carte

Celebrity chefs, culinary students, and charities inspire a one-of-a-kind gourmet dinner at the Detroit Athletic Club. // Photographs by Patrick Gloria

By R.J. King - May 7, 2024



The team that prepared and served an array of dishes and wines for Legends of the Stove, a tribute to metro Detroit's culinary heritage, held on Jan. 15 at the Detroit Athletic Club. Photo courtesy of Visionalist Entertainment Productions.

Major corporate and charitable events can take a year or more to organize, manage, and execute, and as soon as one anniversary or celebration is done, the planning begins for the next one.

But what if there isn't sufficient time to organize a major milestone, especially a one-of-a-kind culinary extravaganza and fundraiser that requires coordinating with 40 of metro Detroit's top chefs, sommeliers, restaurant owners, general managers, and maître ds?



For anyone planning a major event in a compressed time frame, consider the execution of Legends of the Stove, a tribute to metro Detroit’s culinary heritage that was held on Jan. 15 at the Detroit Athletic Club. The only hitch was pulling together the entire production in 10 weeks during the holiday season.



Legends of the Stove menu

Apart from reaching out, confirming, and coordinating with the culinary masters on the dinner and dessert selections, and how and where offerings such as beef Wellington would be prepared on-site, the reception was being filmed as part of “Detroit: The City of Chefs.” The documentary will debut this fall on Detroit Public Television, and coincide with a red carpet premiere.

To get started, on Oct. 30, Chef Keith Famie, a longtime filmmaker and executive producer and director of Visionalist Entertainment Productions in Wixom, sent an email to Master Chef Shawn Loving and General Manager Charles Johnson of the Detroit Athletic Club.

“I would like to create a dinner event/invite only, which would include outside guests as well as DAC members,” Famie wrote. “These guests would all be seen on camera as we would film the service. We would invite several historical chefs to be part of the menu preparation, and we would film this as part of the story of current iconic chefs and those from the past.

“I wanted to give the DAC the first opportunity to be the location featured. I see the event being of benefit to a few local charities highlighting how the hospitality industry and chef community come together to help support social issues, and I see this taking place in February sometime. Clearly this would be a historical evening in so many ways.”

While Loving and Johnson, along with the DAC board of directors, were open to hosting the event in the club’s main dining room and the neighboring Pontchartrain and Georgian rooms,

one problem immediately emerged. The second-floor kitchen that services the hospitality rooms was being shut down in mid-February for a complete rebuild that wouldn't be completed until September.

Another potential challenge was the success of the Detroit Lions. After the team won its first playoff game at Ford Field — the DAC offers a pre-game buffet to several hundred members and their guests before each home game — the next contest could have been held on the same Monday night as Legends of the Stove.



The menu included Venison Epigrams with Sauce Grand Veneur by Chef Paul Grosz, who is joined by Margaret Fleming. Below is a selection of hors d'oeuvres.





Chef Luciano DelSignore (bottom) prepared and served Melanzane alla Parmigianain in the DAC's Georgian Room.

“When I received the email to move forward, I said, ‘Wow, I’m staring at Thanksgiving with hundreds of turkeys and dinners to prepare for our members, their families, and their guests, plus carry-out dinners,” says Loving, who served as the event’s culinary host. “And there was a different volume of food service for Christmas.

“I was concerned if we could prepare for Legends of the Stove with the same intensity and focus we’re known for, and deliver it all professionally. So, with my team, (I) put a plan together and I reached out (in early November) and let all the individual contacts know I was 150 percent in, but let me get through Thanksgiving first. And as far as the Lions, we were fortunate the second playoff game was held that Sunday. I mean, really fortunate.”

To mark Detroit’s historical role in the culinary world, Famie, a former chef at Chez Raphael, Les Auteurs, and Forte, wanted to celebrate the present, but also the past — not 20 years or 30 years, but three centuries of comestible history.

From medieval times, chefs and their kitchen brigades played a vital role in the success of the nobility. Following the French Revolution in 1799, the culinary teams of royalty and monarchs cast off what was a rigid system of trade guilds to bring forward fine-dining restaurants.

Still, the hierarchical structure of tightly operated kitchens remained in place. In fact, the double-breasted chef’s jacket is a lasting vestige of culinary leaders, evoking the venerable roots of military ranks.

Long shut off from dining rooms, the emblematic curtain to the back of the house finally opened locally a half century ago, led by Master Chef Milos Cihelka of the Detroit Athletic Club, who got his start at the London Chop House and, following his stint at the DAC, helmed the former Golden Mushroom in Southfield.

In 1972, Cihelka founded the Michigan Chefs de Cuisine Association, an organization that serves to lift the public profile of culinary teams while raising money for charities.

“When you look at iconic culinary figures in our region like Chef Milos, Chef Douglas Grech (Pontchartrain Hotel, The Great Dane, Restaurant Duglass), and Joe Muer Jr. (Joe Muer Restaurants), they set the plateau for all the chefs and culinary teams that followed,” says Chef Marcus Haight, the longtime executive chef at The Lark and today a professor in culinary arts at Schoolcraft College in Livonia.

To ensure that knowledge was passed on to the next generation, Haight and his fellow faculty members made it a point to include students in the preparation of the cuisine for Legends of the Stove.

Limited to 150 guests, the selections included Lobster Bisque with Chive Crème Fraiche, Duck Pie with Cherrywood Smoked Salmon, Pan-Seared Potato Gnocchi, Venison Epigrams, Sauteed Lake Perch Goujons, Red Spiced Wagyu Short Rib, and more.



Haight's dish was Rack of Lamb Genghis Khan; in keeping with the charitable nature of the event, the meat was donated by Fairway Packing Co. in Detroit. His students helped prepare the marinade, while undergraduates from Chef Brian Polcyn's (Pike Street, Five Lakes Grill, Forest Grill) class did the butchering.

"When I was at the event, I was struck by the overall positive attitude," Haight says. "I realized it was a snapshot in time to see everyone together who contributed to the restaurants in this town. It was a moment we'll likely never see again. We're fortunate to work in the Motor City, which brought so much here from around the world."

Starting in the 1920s, as local automakers and suppliers expanded beyond North America, executives and managers were introduced to new cuisines, wines, and spirits. At the same time, the region has long attracted people from nearly every country, given Detroit was founded in 1701 and is the oldest city in the Midwest.

Pair that with Henry Ford's decision in 1914 to double workers' wages to \$5 a day. The unprecedented pay hike, which was largely matched by other automakers and suppliers, attracted thousands of workers from every corner of the globe.

As Famie's filmmaking team notes, metro Detroit is "one of the world's most culturally diverse and unique places to dine." It also "paved the way for Detroit to introduce a diverse range of dining destinations rivaled only by New York or Paris."

"I really saw Legends of the Stove as a way to celebrate the past, honor the present, and nurture the future," Famie says. "The event wasn't easy by any stretch, but it was rewarding. We raised money for Gilda's Club Metro Detroit, Rising Stars Academy, and the Rainbow Connection."

To help defray costs, the participating restaurants and culinary institutes, along with Chef Source in Canton Township, Great Lakes Wine & Spirits in Highland Park, Carmela Foods in Fraser, and the Toni A. Wisne Foundation in Novi, among others, donated nearly everything.

Taking it all in, Famie, who has directed and produced dozens of films, and once appeared on a season of "Survivor," summed up the highlights.

"Our executive producers — Tony and Mary Schimizzi, John and Carole Kulhavi, and Roger and Mary Kreager — played an important role, and we had students participate from the culinary programs at Schoolcraft College, Oakland Community College, and Macomb Community College. When I look back, we might have been crazy to pull everything together in 10 weeks, but it was certainly worth celebrating the present and enlightening the future."

## DBusiness Daily Update: 'Detroit: The City of Faith' to Debut Friday on DPTV

By Tim Keenan and RJ King - March 21, 2024



Fr. Patrick Setto at St. Joseph Chaldean Catholic Church in Troy is filmed for “Detroit: The City of Faith.” // Photo courtesy of Keith Famie

### 'Detroit: The City of Faith' to Debut Friday on DPTV

“Detroit: The City of Faith,” the latest documentary from Wixom-based filmmaker Keith Famie, will debut on Friday at 8 p.m. on Detroit Public Television.

The film is an inspiring story of Detroit’s ethnically rich faith community featuring Armenian, Chaldean, Lebanese, Syrian, Scottish, Polish, Hispanic, African American, and German Christian traditions.

The documentary recently premiered at Saint John’s Resort in Plymouth Township to a diverse audience of around 180 people. Under one roof, spiritual leaders and congregation members attended from Kirk in the Hills Presbyterian Church, Historic Trinity Lutheran Church, St. John Armenian Church, Basilica of Ste. Anne de Detroit, Second Baptist Church of Detroit, Basilica of St. Mary, and St. Joseph Chaldean Catholic Church.

Prior to the start of the film, Msgr. Charles Kosanke, Very Rev. Aren Jebejian, Rev. Lawrence Rodgers, Rev. Darryl Lee Andrzejewski, Rev. Edwin Estevez, Rev. Kelsey Sorge, Rev. Patrick Setto, and Fr. George Shalhoub offered personal prayers.



# SCHOOLCRAFT CONNECTION

## Documenting history

Schoolcraft collaborates with community members to highlight Detroit's best chefs

[Kathryn Wenske](#), Editor-in-Chief

March 18, 2024



Cast and crew members pose for a group photo after shooting some scenes inside the Schoolcraft Culinary Arts kitchen for “Detroit: The City of Chefs” documentary. (Photo courtesy of Schoolcraft College)

Humans have recorded history in various ways throughout the years. From cave paintings, written documents starting with the Egyptians, to now media. This act of documentation has diversity in its motive, with some being memorial; such as a way to honor those who have passed, as well as highlighting true talent. This is exactly what the upcoming 2024 fall “Detroit: The City of Chefs” documentary encompasses.

Filmed all throughout the city at some of Detroit's top chefs' restaurants, there was a particularly special place that needed to be included in the filming: Schoolcraft College.

“I’ve always had a deep relationship with the Schoolcraft Culinary department dating back to when I worked for Chef Benson; one of the first culinary instructors at the college,” said Executive Producer/Director of “Detroit: The City of Chefs” and Visionalist Entertainment Productions Chef Keith Famie. “While I never attended Schoolcraft or any culinary college for that matter, Schoolcraft has always held a special spot in my heart for so many reasons. Many of the instructors are close friends of mine for many years for a wide range of reasons; both professional and personal.”

Detroit is famous for its automotive boom with Henry Ford and soulful music. However, something that accompanies these two things is food; which as argued by Culinary Arts Program Coordinator and Faculty member Chef Chris Misiak, is a Detroit quality that often goes unnoticed. The proposal of involvement presented by Famie to Misiak was met by excitement, as well as enticement to the rest of campus once word got out.



Computer Graphics Technology professor Jeremy Salo speak to Culinary Arts program coordinator Chef Chris Misiak during a recording session inside the Sound Recording Technology studio on campus. (photo courtesy of Schoolcraft College)

“Being the Faculty Co-Chair for Core Abilities gives me a unique opportunity to keep in contact with faculty all over campus at Schoolcraft. When Chef Misiak explained the project to me, I instantly wanted to become involved. What Chef Misiak is doing with the Culinary department is beyond outstanding,” said CGT Faculty and Department Chair Jeremy Salo. “Food is a major part of culture right along with art and music. We just use different mediums. The possibility of tying them all together while paying homage to the greats of the area was very intriguing. To hear that the well known Director and Chef Famie was producing this made it even more exciting.”



Schoolcraft is featured in the trailer, with personal interviews with the current and former Culinary Arts instructors, and alums who founded restaurants in Metro Detroit. Not only were Schoolcraft faculty involved in collaboration while filming at the College, but active students were an essential part of the video production, interviews and sound recording for the documentary.

“We actually recorded the music for the opening scene, which is a bunch of chefs in stop motion claymation developed by College of Creative Studies [student Alexandra Martinescul who dedicated a 15 week winter semester to the creation],” said Misiak. “The music was created in collaboration with the Sound Recording Technology Department and kitchen equipment; chopping of knives, whisking in bowls and pepper shakers shaking like maracas.”



CMPC Joe Decker and CMB CEPC Heather Moore arrange and place the clay characters onto the cake prior to filming one of the scenes for the “Detroit: The City of Chefs” documentary on Feb. 8, 2024 inside the Culinary kitchen at Schoolcraft College. (photo courtesy of Schoolcraft College)

Passion is enveloped in the “Detroit: The City of Chefs” documentary. This opportunity prompted the ability to highlight the artists behind the kitchen, who’s work cannot be hung in a museum.

“I’ve enjoyed every moment immensely working with both the students and leadership at Schoolcraft, it’s always an adventure,” noted Famie, as positivity radiated from the film set.



“We only have so much time in this life. People would rather do a job that brings them joy and meaning over becoming filthy rich. Storytelling, art and complex forms of communication is what makes us human,” said Salo. “You cannot have a happy and successful society without them.

Some of us are lucky enough to be creators of media and art for a living. If we give people a chance to be creative and share their talents with the world, they will do so and we will all benefit.”

The “Detroit: The City of Chefs” 90 minute documentary will debut on PBS and Detroit Public Television.

The year-long production has not disclosed a specific date, but it will be available to the public during the fall semester.

For more information on “Detroit: The City of Chefs” and to see the trailer now go to <https://detroitcityofchefs.com>.



# DBUSINESS

DETROIT'S PREMIER BUSINESS JOURNAL

## A La Carte

Celebrity chefs, culinary students, and charities inspire a one-of-a-kind gourmet dinner at the Detroit Athletic Club.

BY R.J. KING |  PATRICK GLORIA

**M**ajor corporate and charitable events can take a year or more to organize, manage, and execute, and as soon as one anniversary or celebration is done, the planning begins for the next one.

But what if there isn't sufficient time to organize a major milestone, especially a one-of-a-kind culinary extravaganza and fundraiser that requires coordinating with 40 of metro Detroit's top chefs, sommeliers, restaurant owners, general managers, and maitre ds?

For anyone planning a major event in a compressed time frame, consider the execution of *Legends of the Stove*, a tribute to metro Detroit's culinary heritage that was held on Jan. 15 at the Detroit Athletic Club. The only hitch was pulling together the entire production in 10 weeks during the holiday season.

Apart from reaching out, confirming, and coordinating with the culinary masters on the dinner and dessert selections, and how and where offerings such as beef Wellington would be prepared on-site, the reception was being filmed as part of "Detroit: The City of Chefs." The documentary will debut this fall on Detroit Public Television, and coincide with a red carpet premiere.

To get started, on Oct. 30, Chef Keith Famie, a longtime filmmaker and executive producer and director of Visionalist Entertainment Productions in Wixom, sent an email to Master Chef Shawn Loving and General Manager Charles J. Chambers of the Detroit Athletic Club.

"I would like to create a dinner event/invite only, which would include outside guests as well as DAC members," Famie wrote. "These guests would all be seen on camera as we would film the service. We would invite several historical chefs to be part of the menu preparation, and we would film this as part of the story of current iconic chefs and those from the past.

"I wanted to give the DAC the first opportunity to be the location featured. I see the event being of benefit to a few local charities highlighting how the



hospitality industry and chef community come together to help support social issues, and I see this taking place in February sometime. Clearly this would be a historical evening in so many ways."

While Loving and Chambers, along with the DAC board of directors, were open to hosting the event in the club's main dining room and the neighboring Pontchartrain and Georgian rooms, one problem immediately emerged. The second-floor kitchen that services the hospitality rooms was being shut down in mid-February for a complete rebuild that wouldn't be completed until September.

Another potential challenge was the success of the Detroit Lions. After the team won its first playoff game at Ford Field — the DAC offers a pre-game buffet to several hundred members and their guests before each home game — the next contest could have been held on the same Monday night as *Legends of the Stove*.

"When I received the email to move forward, I said, 'Wow, I'm staring at Thanksgiving with hundreds of turkeys and dinners to prepare for our members, their families, and their guests, plus carry-out dinners,'" says Loving, who served as the event's culinary host. "And there was a different volume of food service for Christmas.

"I was concerned if we could prepare for *Legends of the Stove* with the same intensity and focus we're known for, and deliver it all professionally. So, with my team, (I) put a plan together and I reached out (in early November) and let all the individual contacts know I was 150 percent in, but let me get through Thanksgiving first. And as far as the Lions, we were fortunate the second playoff game was held that Sunday. I mean, really fortunate."

To mark Detroit's historical role in the culinary world, Famie, a former chef at *Chez Raphael*, *Les Auteurs*, and *Forte*, wanted to celebrate the present, but also the past — not 20 years or 30 years, but three centuries of comestible history.

From medieval times, chefs and their kitchen brigades played a vital role in the success of the nobility. Following the French Revolution in 1799, the culinary teams of royalty and monarchs cast off what was a rigid system of trade guilds to bring forward fine-dining restaurants.

Still, the hierarchical structure of tightly operated kitchens remained in place. In fact, the double-breasted chef's jacket is a lasting vestige of culinary leaders, evoking the venerable roots of military ranks.

Long shut off from dining rooms, the emblematic curtain to the back of the house finally opened locally a half century ago, led by Master Chef Milos Cihelka of the Detroit Athletic Club, who got his start at the London Chop House and, following his stint at the DAC, helmed the former Golden Mushroom in Southfield.

In 1972, Cihelka founded the Michigan Chefs de Cuisine Association, an organization that serves to lift the public profile of culinary teams while raising money for charities.

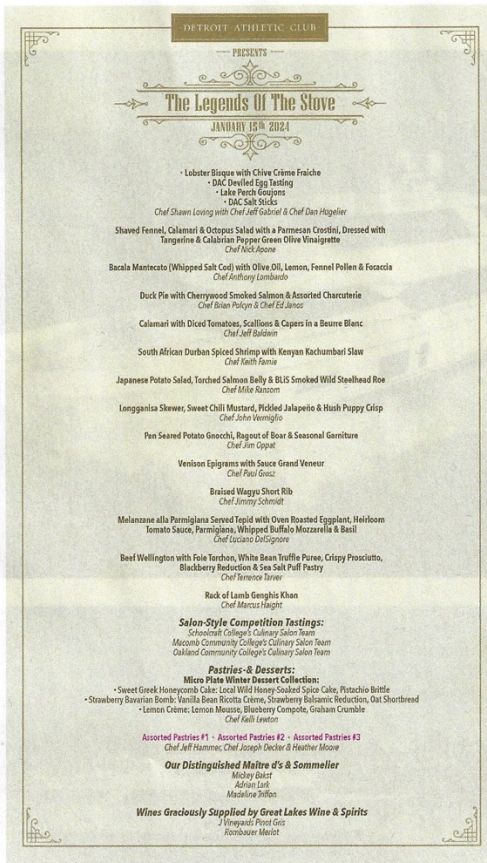
"When you look at iconic culinary figures in our region like Chef Milos, Chef Douglas Grech (Pontchartrain Hotel, The Great Dane, Restaurant Duglass), and Joe Muer Jr. (Joe Muer Restaurants), they set the plateau for all the chefs and culinary teams that followed," says Chef Marcus Haight, the longtime executive chef at *The Lark* and today a professor in culinary arts at Schoolcraft College in Livonia.

To ensure that knowledge was passed on to the next generation, Haight and his fellow faculty members made it a point to include students in the preparation of the cuisine for *Legends of the Stove*.

Limited to 150 guests, the selections included Lobster Bisque with Chive Crème Fraiche, Duck Pie with Cherrywood Smoked Salmon, Pan-Seared Potato Gnocchi, Venison Epigrams, Sauteed Lake Perch Goujons, Red Spiced Wagyu Short Rib, and more.

Haight's dish was Rack of Lamb Genghis Khan; in keeping with the charitable nature of the event, the





**A DISH IN TIME**  
The culinary and wine team for Legends of the Stove gather on the staircase of the Detroit Athletic Club, far left. The menu included Venison Epigrams with Sauce Grand Veneur by Chef Paul Groz, who is joined by Margaret Fleming. Below is a selection of hors d'oeuvres. Chef Luciano DeSignore prepared and served Melanzane alla Parmigiana in the DAC's Georgian Room.



meat was donated by Fairway Packing Co. in Detroit. His students helped prepare the marinade, while undergraduates from Chef Brian Polcyn's (Pike Street, Five Lakes Grill, Forest Grill) class did the butchering.

"When I was at the event, I was struck by the overall positive attitude," Haight says. "I realized it was a snapshot in time to see everyone together who contributed to the restaurants in this town. It was a moment we'll likely never see again. We're fortunate to work in the Motor City, which brought so much here from around the world."

Starting in the 1920s, as local automakers and suppliers expanded beyond North America, executives and managers were introduced to new cuisines, wines, and spirits. At the same time, the region has long attracted people from nearly every country, given Detroit was founded in 1701 and is the oldest city in the Midwest.

Pair that with Henry Ford's decision in 1914 to double workers' wages to \$5 a day. The unprecedented pay hike, which was largely matched by other automakers and suppliers, attracted thousands of workers from every corner of the globe.

As Famie's filmmaking team notes, metro Detroit is "one of the world's most culturally diverse and unique places to dine." It also "paved the way for

Detroit to introduce a diverse range of dining destinations rivaled only by New York or Paris."

"I really saw Legends of the Stove as a way to celebrate the past, honor the present, and nurture the future," Famie says. "The event wasn't easy by any stretch, but it was rewarding. We raised money for Gil-da's Club Metro Detroit, Rising Stars Academy, and the Rainbow Connection."

To help defray costs, the participating restaurants and culinary institutes, along with Chef Source in Canton Township, Great Lakes Wine & Spirits in Highland Park, Carmela Foods in Fraser, and the Toni A. Wisne Foundation in Novi, among others, donated nearly everything.

Taking it all in, Famie, who has directed and produced dozens of films, and once appeared on a season of "Survivor," summed up the highlights.

"Our executive producers — Tony and Mary Schimizzi, John and Carole Kulhavi, and Roger and Mary Kreager — played an important role, and we had students participate from the culinary programs at Schoolcraft College, Oakland Community College, and Macomb Community College. When I look back, we might have been crazy to pull everything together in 10 weeks, but it was certainly worth celebrating the present and enlightening the future." **DB**







## DINING NEWS

## Shining a Light on Chefs

Keith Famie talks about his upcoming documentary celebrating Detroit's cuisine and its makers

BY JACK THOMAS

You may have dined at one of Farmington Hills-born Keith Famie's renowned metro Detroit restaurants in the '80s or '90s (Chez Raphael, Les Auteurs, Forte). And you may have seen him as a *Survivor* finalist. What you may not know is that he is a Michigan Emmy-winning director-producer who is currently working on an upcoming Detroit Public TV documentary, *Detroit: The City of Chefs*, set to premiere later this year. We caught up with him in January, after his Legends of the Stove event at the Detroit Athletic Club, a charity dinner prepared by an all-star, multigenerational lineup of metro Detroit chefs. The event will appear in the documentary, along with stop-motion animation sequences produced by students at the College for Creative Studies.

### **Hour Detroit: What can viewers expect when watching *Detroit: The City of Chefs*?**

Keith Famie: The film is not just about the historical relevance of the culinary industry, but it's also about the current relevance of our culinary industry in Detroit and the individuals carrying it forward. It's going to be a fairly rich story, kind of like an onion with a lot of layers to it.... The Italians, the Poles, the Irish, the Germans, the Lebanese — this vast, rich culture of ethnic groups that came here, they brought their cooking styles and ingredients, and that built who we are today, which is pretty significant.

### **How did the Legends of the Stove dinner come about?**

In [*Detroit: The City of Chefs*], there's a story unfolding about how in the '70s, chefs started coming out of the kitchen ...

to start cooking at socially charitable events. And I think charities figured out, "Wait a minute — if we want to have a really successful event, what if we just invite chefs to cook?" And so that became just a mainstay. So, my thought was, "Let's do a chef's charity dinner. What if we bring together as many of the old guards and current new ones as possible?" Then it was like, "Well, there's only really one place we should be doing this that is the most historical culinary landmark in our state — the Detroit Athletic Club."

### **How does the automotive industry play a part in the film?**

The automotive executives in the '50s and '60s started doing a lot of traveling. And as they traveled around the world, they were able to refine their palate; they were able to see a whole range of new cooking styles. Well, they brought

those interests and those passions back here and almost kind of challenged chefs, if you will. Back then, the only places you could really go to get a meal of that nature, that creativity, and that quality of ingredients were clubs and hotels. And eventually restaurants flourished from that.

### **What will the animated sequences look like?**

People think of chefs as staunch and serious. But by nature, we're whimsical. So I felt that a fun way to open the film was to create a whimsical moment, almost [like] Pinocchio and Geppetto. So [for the animated sequences] we've got [figurines of] a master chef, pastry chef, and a master baker working on this elaborate cake. The whole opening of the film is the chefs using utensils and bowls to make one cohesive piece of music that comes to life. And then we're going to use the

same chef lookalikes to close the film with a special endearing message in memory of those who've passed on.

### **What do you think sets Detroit apart from other cities in the culinary field?**

Detroit has always been considered this kind of "flyover community" to New York or LA. So, I think our chefs here kind of ... they know there's more at stake. I think they really want to make it known that we're as good and as hardworking, as creative, as professional as anybody in the country. Detroit, and Michigan, have a lot to be proud of when it comes to our culinary heritage.



Generations of leading Detroit chefs and restaurant professionals pose at the Legends of the Stove event in the Detroit Athletic Club.



## DBusiness Daily Update: CCS, Schoolcraft College Joining Production of 'Detroit: The City of Chefs' Documentary

By Tim Keenan and RJ King - January 29, 2024



Twenty clay puppets created by CCS student Alexandra Martinescul will be featured in stop-motion animation in "Detroit: The City of Chefs." // Photo by R.J. King



## **CCS, Schoolcraft College Joining Production of ‘Detroit: The City of Chefs’ Documentary**

Twenty clay puppets created by College for Creative Studies student Alexandra Martinescul will be featured in stop-motion animation in “Detroit: The City of Chefs,” a documentary by Wixom filmmaker Keith Famie and his Visionalist Entertainment Productions team.

The film, which will debut on Detroit Public Television/PBS this fall, highlights the rich culinary history of metro Detroit and showcases Detroit’s great chefs, its restaurants, and the hospitality industry.

The clay figures are look-alikes of some of Detroit’s best-known chefs and will be used in a custom-created studio set at CCS to be animated with stop-motion.

CCS in Detroit has dedicated a 15-week semester from January to May 2024 to creating an animated story that will open and close the 90-minute film. Adjunct professor of stop-motion Kevin Coyle and chair and associate professor for entertainment arts at CCS, David Gazdowicz, say they are fully behind the project.

The stop-motion animation is a collaborative effort with the team at Schoolcraft College Culinary Arts Department’s Certified Master Pastry Chef Joe Decker and Certified Executive Pastry Chef Heather Moore. These two chefs will be putting together a three-tiered cake that honors Detroit’s culinary heritage. Viewers will see the chefs putting this together, as well as pretending to create the miniature look-alikes that they will then place on the cake.

As the chefs leave to go home, the clay puppets come to life through stop motion and break into a song created by the sounds that they make with small kitchen utensils in a fun, whimsical way. This piece will end with a chocolate display piece with the title of the film, “Detroit: The City of Chefs” ... Dedicated, Daring, Defiant.

The faculty helping with this project from Schoolcraft College are Program Coordinator and Chef Chris Misiak, Professor and Department Chair Jeremy Salo, and Associate Professor of Animation Josh Harrell. CGT faculty and Salo, in collaboration with the Sound Recording Technology Department, is working on creating the musical score.

Famie and his crew will be at Schoolcraft College today to embark on the first stages of this journey with the Schoolcraft College staff and the students with a recording session to record the sounds of kitchen utensils.

Filming with Decker and Moore will take place at 5 p.m. on Feb. 8. Once that filming is complete, the set then goes to CCS for the duration of the animation process.

For more information on the film, visit [detroitcityofchefs.com](http://detroitcityofchefs.com).



By R.J. King - January 17, 2024  
Photographs by Patrick Gloria

## Legends of the Stove

As part of a documentary film to be called “Detroit: The City of Chefs” — to be released later this year on Detroit Public Television by Keith Famie, executive producer and director, and his team at Visionalist Entertainment Productions in Wixom — The Legends of the Stove took place at the Detroit Athletic Club on Jan. 15. The historic gathering of iconic chefs, restauranteurs, and front-of-the-house legends from metro Detroit featured some 40 culinary masters, including Chef Milos Cihelka, Chef Douglas “Duglass” Grech, Chef Shawn Loving, Chef Ed Janos, Chef Jimmy Schmidt, Chef Anthony Lombardo, Chef Luciano Del Signore, Master Sommelier Madeline Triffon, Adrian Lark, Joe Vicari, and more. The evening, which included gourmet cuisine and wine, benefitted Gilda’s Club Metro Detroit, Rising Stars Academy, and the Rainbow Collection.



Chef Austin Hannah,  
Chef Mia Johnson



Chef Jim Oppat,  
Chef Mike Osinski



Chef Keith Famie, Chef Ed  
Janos, Chef Brian Polcyn



Chef Luciano DelSignore



Chef Milos Cihelka, Madeline  
Triffon, Steve Allen



Chef Paul Grosz,  
Margret Fleming





Chef Shawn Loving,  
Chef Milos Cihelka



Chef Tricia Holt,  
Chef Terence Tarver



Dylan Walker, Chef Jeff  
Gabriel, Austin Hanih



Gino Baratta, Emmet Baratta,  
Chef Paul Grosz, Beauregard Nash



Joe Muer, Carl Schiller



Joe Schimizzi, Tony  
Schimizzi, Peter Bondi



Paul Johnson, Chef Kelli Lewton

## Documentarian Keith Famie Recruiting Sponsors for 'Detroit: The City of Chefs'

By [Tim Keenan and RJ King](#) - October 13, 2023



CCS student Alexandra Martinescul created these clay figures of chefs Milos Cihelka and Dan Hugelier for "Detroit: The City of Chefs."  
// Photo courtesy of Keith Famie

### Documentarian Keith Famie Recruiting Sponsors for 'Detroit: The City of Chefs'

Wixom-based documentarian Keith Famie is offering an opportunity for businesses and foundations to participate in his newest film, "Detroit: The City of Chefs," and support the work of the Entertainment Arts Department at Detroit's College for Creative Studies.

The film, which will debut on Detroit Public TV/PBS in the fall of 2024, is now in production and includes clay look-a-likes of some of Detroit's best-known chefs. CCS is in the process of creating 12 of these full puppet figures that will be used on a custom-created studio set so they can be stop motion animated.

CCS is dedicating a 15-week semester from January-May 2024 to creating an animated story that will open and close the 90-minute film.

"In order for this story to come to life, we need to gain the support from the business and philanthropy community, who are not only excited about Detroit's and Michigan's culinary heritage but also appreciate the creative design teachings of one of America's most respected institutions — The College for Creative Studies," Famie says.

For more information on how to donate to the film's production, visit [detroitcityofchefs.com](http://detroitcityofchefs.com)



## DBusiness Daily Update: New Documentary from Filmmaker Keith Famie Explores Detroit's Culinary Heritage

By Tim Keenan and RJ King - September 27, 2023



Detroit restaurant legend Joe Muer Jr. discusses Detroit's culinary history with Keith Famie in "Detroit: The City of Chefs." // Photo courtesy of Keith Famie

A new documentary from Wixom-based filmmaker Keith Famie called "Detroit: The City of Chefs" will debut Fall 2024 and be shown on Detroit Public Television.

"Detroit's culinary heritage is as important to our city's story as the automobile," Famie says. "Even during economic downturns, legendary dining spots like the Detroit Athletic Club, the Pontchartrain Hotel, Joe Muer's, the Roostertail, Mario's, and the London Chop House were setting standards of excellence for cuisine and service across the world's stage." The film will cover a wide array of Detroit and Michigan culinary topics, including:

- History of the ethnic community, restaurants, and food purveyors
- The early professional chefs, country clubs, and hotels
- The early food critics
- History of chefs as charitable ambassadors to the community
- History of the Michigan Chefs De Cuisine
- Michigan's culinary colleges
- S. Culinary Olympics
- Ice Carving competitions in Plymouth Township
- Michigan's Master Chefs
- Kitchen designs and how they evolved
- Matri'd's and the wine industry
- Today's leading Metro Detroit restaurants and the next generation of chefs

The documentary by Famie's team at Visionalist Entertainment Productions promises to tell the unfiltered story Detroit's culinary heritage. "Expect to laugh, be inspired, reminisce, and possibly tear up as you join us as we celebrate Detroit's expansive reputation as an international dining destination," Famie says. A charity preview gala is being planned and details will be revealed at a later date.

# Detroit Free Press

DINING

## Documentary film to focus on the history of Detroit's chefs: Watch the trailer



[Susan Selasky](#)

Detroit Free Press  
Sept. 23, 2023



Director and producer Keith Famie with restaurateur Joe Muer Jr. *Provided by Keith Famie*

A new documentary is in the works from Keith Famie, a local award-winning producer and director and chef, that will showcase the culinary heritage of metro Detroit's chefs, many of them master chefs, its restaurants and the hospitality industry.

"Detroit's culinary heritage is as important to our city's story as the automobile," according to the film's overview.



Famie and Tony and Mary Schimizzi are the executive producers for "[Detroit: The City of Chefs](#)" a Detroit Public TV documentary.

"I've been wanting to tell this story for 20 years," Famie recently told the Free Press. "These were the guys that were the hot chefs in the '80s and '90s."

And in order to talk about and chronicle Detroit's rich chef and culinary history, Famie who is also a chef, needed to go way back — beginning with the many immigrants who came to Detroit.

"It began in the 1960s, with Detroit on overdrive — General Motors, Ford and Chrysler were expanding globally and executives from these industry giants, thanks to extensive work-related travel, became savvy, adventurous diners with a love of fine wine and professional service," according to the film's overview.

Those interviewed for the film include both past and present culinary influencers: some of Detroit's most recognizable chefs who molded metro Detroit's culinary scene decades ago as well chefs and restaurant owners who are shaping it today.



Keith Famie and Joe Muer Jr. *Provided by Keith Famie*

And Famie knows the story well because decades ago he was part of that group of young and upcoming chefs in metro Detroit.

Many of those chefs worked with and learned from well-known European chefs like Milos Cihelka from Czechoslovakia, French-Canadian chef Douglas Grech, known as "Chef Duglass,

Duglass," and Yvonne Gill, who hailed from New Zealand, Famie said. Cihelka, now 93, is featured in the film, and is known as the "godfather of chefs" in metro Detroit.

The film trailer, narrated by Chuck Gaidica, formerly of WDIV-TV (Channel 4), features Joe Muer, Cihelka and Joe Vicari of Joe Vicari Restaurant Group, which includes Andiamo Italian eateries and Joe Muer Seafood. Others featured are Brian Polcyn, Mary Brady, Luciano DelSignore and Shawn Loving.

"Detroit: The City of Chefs" will also examine how Detroit's chefs and restaurants played a role in supporting local charities, the ethnic community and food purveyors and the front-of-the-house maitre'd leadership.

The film, Famie said, "will step back in time. "

"The auto industry drove a lot of the expectations from a global standpoint because executives traveled around the world," Famie said.

The film will take viewers to iconic restaurants at country clubs, Famie said, like the Detroit Athletic Club (DAC), Pontchartrain and the London Chophouse.

"There was a key point in time when things changed in the '50s and '60s with Duglass, Duglass, Milos and Yvonne Gill," Famie said. "They brought a new feel of professionalism. That expectation, that drive for cooking that set the foundation for who we are today."

Cihelka, Famie said, was responsible for creating and founding in 1970 the Michigan Chefs de Cuisine Association, a professional organization for chefs.

The film will also highlight the role and impact of metro Detroit's culinary arts schools including Schoolcraft College with its many master chef instructors, the culinary arts programs at Oakland Community College and Macomb Community College. Also featured will be those who wrote about Detroit's evolving food scene.

"As the second generation of chefs, the brat pack if you will, were developing a new style, so were the food writers," Famie said. "They were learning to write about food."

The film is due out in the fall of 2024.

To learn more about the film, go to [detroitcityofchefs.com](http://detroitcityofchefs.com).



## Watch the trailer for upcoming documentary 'Detroit: The City of Chefs'



[Melody Baetens](#)

The Detroit News

Published Sept. 21, 2023

As the Detroit dining scene's future looks bright with new restaurants opening up on a nearly daily basis and local chefs getting name-dropped in national publications on the regular, a new documentary is in the works that aims to look back on our area's culinary past.

“Detroit: The City of Chefs” features interviews with major players who were a part of the restaurant scene in the second half of the 20th century. Director, producer and chef Keith Famie wants to tell the story of Michigan chefs de cuisine, master chefs, food critics, Schoolcraft College's culinary arts program and the impact immigrants had on the dining landscape.



Chef Luciano DelSignore is interviewed for “*Detroit: The City of Chefs*”, a documentary from Keith Famie. *Detroit: The City of Chefs*

“It began in the 1960s, with Detroit on overdrive – General Motors, Ford and Crysler were expanding globally and executives from these industry giants, thanks to extensive, work-related travel, became savvy, adventurous diners with a love of fine wine and professional service,” reads the film’s overview.

Narrated by former WDIV personality Chuck Gaidica, “Detroit: The City of Chefs” is set for a 2024 release.

“As Detroiters, we often take for granted the rich history of our culinary heritage,” says Gaidica in the trailer. “In fact, our roots to the extremely diverse restaurant scene can be traced back to those early immigrants.”



Director and producer Keith Famie interviews Joe Muer Jr. at Joe Muer Seafood in Bloomfield Hills. *Detroit: The City of Chefs*

Along with executive producers Famie and Tony and Mary Schimizzi, the documentary features interviews with chefs and restaurateurs like Milos Cihelka, Brian Polcyn, Rick Halberg, Mary Brady, Shawn Loving, Paul Grosz, Luciano DelSignore, Joe Muer Jr. and many more.

Visit [detroitcityofchefs.com](http://detroitcityofchefs.com) to learn more about the documentary.