



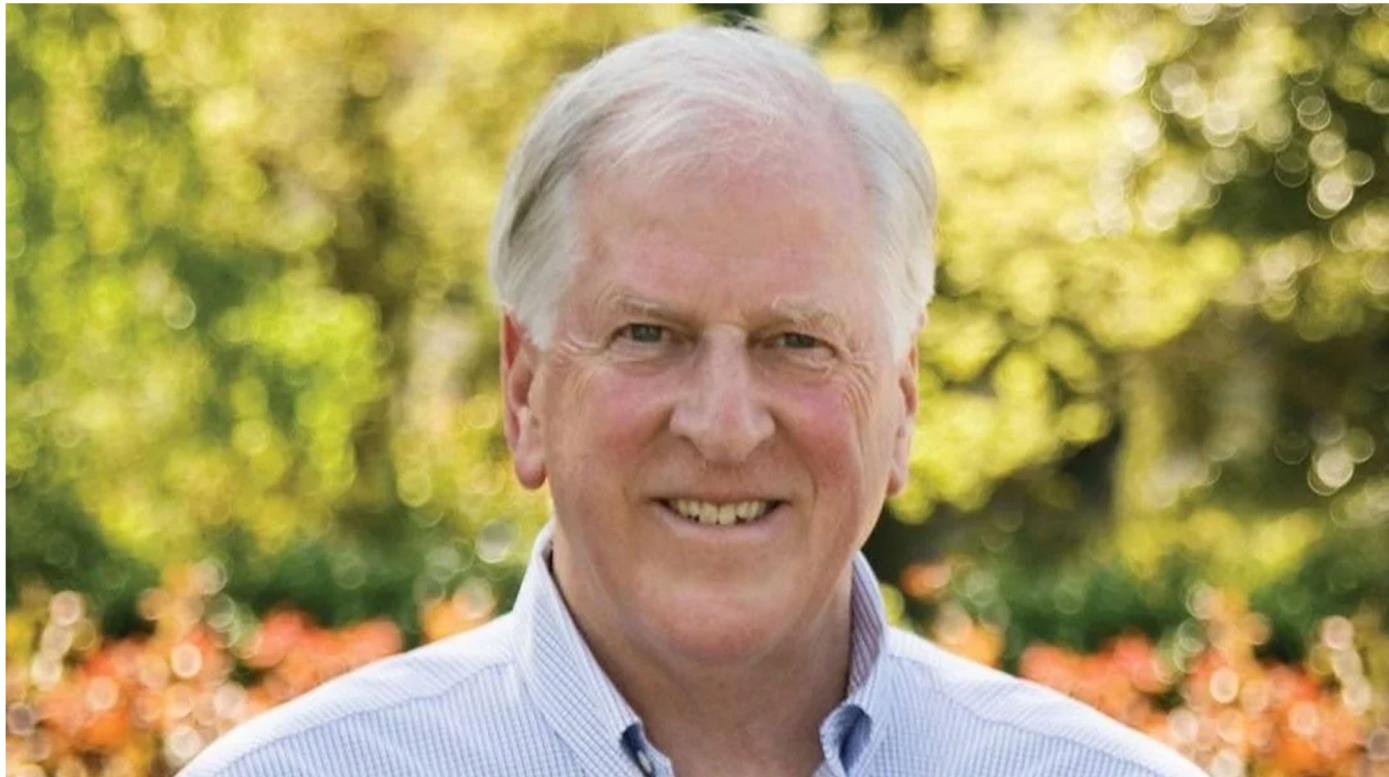
NORCAL • PUBLIC • MEDIA STARS OF FOOD & WINE AWARDS

Congressman Mike Thompson to be honored with the Grand Award for Outstanding Leadership by NorCal Public Media

4th Annual Stars of Food & Wine Awards Spotlights Environmental Leaders

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE—Rohnert Park, CA, January 29, 2026

Northern California Public Media (NorCal Public Media) today announced that the **Grand Award for Outstanding Leadership** will be presented to **Mike Thompson, U.S. Representative for California's 4th Congressional District**, recognizing his work on issues that the Stars of Food & Wine Awards seeks to spotlight—the environment and the health of farms, rivers, ecosystems and the people of Northern California.



The award will be presented to Mr. Thompson at NorCal Public Media's **4th Annual Stars of Food & Wine Awards** on Saturday, March 21, 2026 at Sonoma State University in Rohnert Park, CA.



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"NorCal Public Media is pleased to honor Congressman Mike Thompson with the Grand Award this year," said CEO Darren LaShelle. "He is a leader who is deeply rooted in this community."

United States Representative Mike Thompson represents California's 4th Congressional District, which includes all of Napa and Lake Counties and parts of Solano, Sonoma, and Yolo Counties.

Thompson's long history of support not only for farms, ranches and food producers, but in food equity, climate change mitigation, land conservation, water issues, research and forward-looking practices at the legislative level were cited by the Awards Committee.

Thompson is Co-Chair of the Land Conservation Caucus, Co-Chair of the Wildlife Refuge Caucus and a lifelong outdoorsman, strongly supporting investing in land conservation, acting to prevent climate change and transitioning to a clean energy economy.

California's 4th Congressional District is a world-renowned food and wine destination with a vibrant agricultural and viticultural heritage. Wine is the largest economic driver in the 4th district.

Thompson is an organic grape grower fully committed to protecting and strengthening farming and ranching communities. He co-founded the Congressional Wine Caucus with more than 100 bipartisan and bicameral members of Congress advancing legislation to serve its priorities. Most recently the Congressional Wine Caucus introduced to Congress a Tariff Relief Act to support growers and producers facing economic losses from tariffs.

For farming and ranching communities, Thompson has authored, supported and voted for legislation providing farmer safety nets, emergency drought and wildfire relief, assisting small family farms, finding funding for crop disease and invasive species research and mitigation efforts, fostering conservation efforts on agricultural lands, providing nutrition assistance to children and families and supporting programs to measure and reduce food waste.



Rep. Mike Thompson with members of the Congressional Wine Caucus



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Concerned with land conservation, Thompson works to preserve our green spaces for younger generations. He has conserved over 4.75 million acres of wetlands and uplands as a member of the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission and through his votes in Congress. He worked with constituent groups and Rep. John Garamendi to secure the original designation of nearly 350,000 acres of the Berryessa Snow Mountain region as a national monument, and he helped expand the monument by over 13,000 acres in 2024.

He also worked with Rep. Garamendi to expand the boundary of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area to preserve areas of Rio Vista for generations to come.

“I am deeply honored to be recognized by NorCal Public Media with this award. As a farmer, conservationist, and lifelong outdoorsman, I know just how critical our ag community and our beautiful public lands are to the health and wellbeing of our community. I’ll never stop working to support our farmers, protect our ecosystems, and deliver for our district,” said Thompson.

This year’s event arrives at a critical moment for local media and independent environmental reporting, with proceeds directly supporting NorCal Public Media’s [Center for Environmental Reporting](#) and its mission to keep trusted, community-focused journalism strong.

The Stars of Food and Wine Awards honor the individuals, families, and organizations across agriculture, viticulture, food, wine, and food justice who are shaping a more sustainable, equitable, and resilient future. These honorees are not simply leaders in their fields—they are visionaries whose work embodies the forward-looking action our region and our planet urgently need. Each of the winners puts community at the heart of their mission, embracing a true “triple bottom line.” Their efforts reflect a commitment to people, planet, and prosperity, and prove that environmental responsibility and economic vitality can rise together. Their leadership reminds us that change is not only possible, but is already happening, right here at home.



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NorCal Public Media's annual celebration has twice earned national Public Media Awards for Best Community Special Event from the National Educational Telecommunications Association (NETA).

This year's event moves to Sonoma State University, underscoring NorCal Public Media's expanding partnerships with local educational institutions and offering many attendees their first opportunity to experience the campus. VIP guests will enjoy a private reception in the Student Center's 4th-floor Overlook Bistro space before all attendees gather in the Grand Ballroom for a tasting, followed by a dinner and awards ceremony.

The full list of 2026 Award Categories and Honorees are:

GRAND AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING LEADERSHIP

Mike Thompson, U.S. Representative for California's 4th Congressional District

Elected official with a long and outstanding record of climate and conservation work at the State and Federal levels.

LAND STEWARDS / REGENERATION

The Giacomini Family, Point Reyes Farmstead Cheese Company

Leaders in regenerative dairy, methane reduction, conservation planning, and sustainable land management.

From pioneering methane digestion and rotational grazing to decades of conservation leadership, the Giacomini family has transformed their 1959 dairy into a nationally recognized model of environmental stewardship and artisan cheesemaking—now led by the second generation of Giacomini sisters.

MAKERS AND ARTISANS

Chef Preeti Mistry, Silver Oak Cellars

Award-winning chef and cultural voice redefining California cuisine through global flavors and sustainable, seasonal cooking.

A James Beard Award-winning chef known for their bold, inclusive culinary lens and high-profile cultural commentary, Chef Preeti is set to lead Silver Oak Cellars' culinary program in 2026, expanding the food-and-wine experience with globally inspired, seasonally rooted menus.



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ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Dan Imhoff, Wild Farm Alliance

Author, advocate, and ecological agriculture communicator working to restore biodiversity across farming landscapes.

Imhoff's decades-long advocacy and communications work helped fuel the national movement toward wild-friendly farming. His leadership with Wild Farm Alliance continues to catalyze biodiversity practices across the country.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Margo True, Civil Eats

Award-winning journalist advancing deeper public understanding of food systems, climate, and community resilience.

From her background at *Gourmet*, *Saveur*, and *Sunset Magazine*, to True's editorial work at Civil Eats, she highlights the intersections of food, climate, justice, and public policy at a time when accurate reporting has never been more essential.

FOOD EQUITY

ExtraFood

Champions of food recovery and equitable access, leading innovative solutions to hunger and food waste in the Bay Area.

ExtraFood's mission is to end hunger, reduce harmful landfill and wasted food in the Bay Area through a regional food recovery program. They rescue excess fresh food from businesses and schools —fresh fruits and vegetables, dairy products, eggs, meat, baked goods, and prepared meals — and immediately deliver it to people facing food insecurity.

WINE WORLD GAME CHANGERS

Grgich Hills Estate

Iconic wine producer leading the Bay Area as its largest regeneratively farmed winery.

Dedicated to sustainability, biodiversity and equitable treatment of farm workers, Grgich also works with local conservation groups on native plant repatriation, and their knowledgeable staff speak at events throughout the country sharing these successful practices with other farmers and vintners.

ABOUT THE EVENT

Proceeds from the *Stars of Food & Wine Awards* support NorCal Public Media's PBS, NPR, and independent public media services, and *The Center for Environmental Reporting*'s award-winning programs and climate solutions.



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Returning to lead the 2026 culinary team is Chef Daniel Kedan, acclaimed restaurateur, Culinary Institute of America instructor, and past award recipient.

Attendees will enjoy a welcome sparkling wine, a tasting of local beverages, and a seated dinner with the awards ceremony. The Awards will once again be hosted by Clark Wolf, host of *Savoring Sonoma* on KRCB 104.9FM, food industry consultant and author.

Tickets are on sale now at norcalpublicmedia.org/awards.

A limited number of press passes are available upon request. Images and additional information are provided at the links below.

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More information and links:

[Learn more about NorCal Public Media](#)

[The Center for Environmental Reporting at NorCal Public Media](#)

[The NorCal Public Media Stars of Food & Wine website](#)

[Press Assets and Photos](#)

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