

NorCal Public Media

Food & Wine Awards

Honoring Makers and Heroes Who Give Back

A PBS/NPR Fundraiser

March 1, 2024

NorCal Public Media Announces Albert Straus as the 2024 Grand Award Winner

For immediate release—Rohnert Park, CA, March 1, 2024

Northern California Public Media is pleased to announce that it will be presenting the Grand Award for Outstanding Achievement to Albert Straus of Straus Family Creamery at the second annual [NorCal Public Media Food & Wine Awards](#), honoring Makers and Heroes who give back. The event takes place Saturday, March 30th at the Luther Burbank Center for the Arts in Santa Rosa, CA.

Northern California Public Media is dedicated to shining a spotlight on environmental issues and their impact on our communities. NorCal's [Center for Environmental Reporting](#) aims to empower our community with knowledge, foster a deeper understanding of environmental challenges we face and inspire collective action towards a sustainable future for the Bay Area and beyond.

Local leaders and organizations within the agriculture, viticulture, and wine industries play a pivotal role in fostering a positive impact on the environment, cultivating sustainable futures, and nurturing the well-being of people in our communities.

NorCal Public Media's Food & Wine Awards celebrates individuals and organizations that exemplify excellence, innovation, and a commitment to the betterment of our local communities and environment through agriculture, viticulture, sustainability, and compassion.

By recognizing these heroes and makers NorCal's hope is to instill lasting inspiration and positive change in our environments and communities.

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From an impressive list of nominations submitted by the general public, the 2024 categories and Award Winners are:

GRAND AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT

Albert Straus – Straus Family Creamery, Petaluma, CA. Albert Straus is an industry pioneer and founder of Straus Family Creamery, the first 100% certified organic creamery in the U.S., and he's changing the landscape of dairy farming in this country. The Dairy was started by his father Bill in 1941 and in 1994 under Albert's management, it became the first certified organic Dairy west of the Mississippi.

In 2005, he implemented a GMO testing and verification program for all animal feeds on the farm, and all organic milk from other dairies supplying the creamery. It was another first—in 2010 Straus Family Creamery was the first in the country to become non-GMO certified.

Further broadening his vision of environmentalism, the farm uses an electric feed truck and other electric vehicles. In 2021 he began testing red seaweed as feed to reduce methane emissions created in cows' digestive tracts and emitted into the atmosphere.



Food & Wine Awards

Honoring Makers and Heroes Who Give Back

A PBS/NPR Fundraiser

Straus is helping other family farms develop carbon farm plans like his, with carbon-sequestering plants and grasses, measuring and optimizing carbon capture, methane bio-digestors turning methane and cow manure into renewable energy to power the farm. The Straus farm is poised to reach carbon-neutral status in the near future.

AGRICULTURAL BIODIVERSITY AND REGNERATION

Don McEnhill - Executive Director, Russian Riverkeeper. Don McEnhill helped to create and launch the Russian Riverkeeper program and has served as Riverkeeper and Executive Director since 2001 when the organization was officially launched as a member of the Waterkeeper Alliance.

Christopher Herrera - Deep Roots Farm, Penngrove, CA. With a heritage spanning seven generations in Sonoma County, Chris Herrera carries storied traditions in livestock, dairy operations, corn, orchards, and vineyards. Deep Roots Farm stands as a testament to his family's enduring legacy, upholding the principles of CCOF organic farming and Demeter Biodynamic Certification.



Brianna Noble, Urban Cowgirl Ranch, Castro Valley, CA

Food & Wine Awards

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A PBS/NPR Fundraiser

Brianna Noble is the founder and owner of Urban Cowgirl Ranch, an equestrian business dedicated to expanding the accessibility of riding and horsemanship to communities historically excluded from the equestrian world. The Urban Cowgirl Ranch Foundation's mission is to expose youth from underserved communities to the horse world through horsemanship and riding. Her vision is to change the face of equine culture and inspire positive futures through horses.

Brianna first garnered international attention when she rode her horse Dapper Dan at downtown Oakland's Black Lives Matter protest over the death of George Floyd. She has become a beacon of hope for people worldwide as peaceful protest rides in solidarity with social change called "Heels Down Fists Up" were held by equestrian communities in the Bay Area and abroad. Brianna led the first HDFU rides in Oakland and Sausalito, CA in 2020.

Tucker Taylor - Kendall Jackson Culinary Gardens, Santa Rosa, CA. Tucker Taylor is an expert in certified organic farming, specialty produce, and sustainability. Prior to joining Kendall Jackson, Tucker oversaw landscaping at every property of the world-renowned chef Thomas Keller's restaurants (French Laundry, Per Se, Bouchon, Ad Hoc), setting the standard for today's farm-to-table fine dining.

FOOD-TO-COMMUNITY LEADERS

Hector Alvarez - Hector's Honey, Fulton, CA. Based on a 2-acre farm in the tiny hamlet of Fulton, Hector Alvarez, founder of Hector's Honey is a legendary local beekeeper and leader in the artisanal food movement, teaching and mentoring other beekeepers on how to produce honey naturally.

Dr. Gail Myers - Farms to Grow, Oakland, CA. In 2004, Dr. Myers co-founded Farms to Grow in Oakland, CA to work in partnership with African American farmers and other farmers of color to sustain their farms, and in collaboration with various grassroots and coalition-based organizations locally and globally.

Judith and Chanowk Yisrael - Yisrael Family Urban Farm, Sacramento, CA. Yisrael farm produces healthy food for the Yisrael family and their community. More importantly, Chanowk and Judith are sharing their skills and knowledge, offering classes, workshops and programs for youth, and teaching others how to grow their own food and cook healthy meals. Their mission is to "transform the hood for G.O.O.D."

Redwood Empire Food Bank, Santa Rosa, CA. Established in 1987, the Redwood Empire Food Bank marshals an army of more than 10,000 volunteers, 102 farms, food manufacturers and suppliers and 150

Food & Wine Awards

Honoring Makers and Heroes Who Give Back

A PBS/NPR Fundraiser

human service organizations feeding people in need through their programs and partner organizations in Sonoma, Lake, Mendocino, Humboldt, and Del Norte counties. As the largest hunger-relief organization in the North Bay, they play a crucial role in helping individuals, families, seniors, and children.

June Michaels - Sonoma Foodrunners. Food rescues have been popping up all over the world to feed the hungry and reduce the waste of good food. When you ask June why she founded Sonoma Food Runners, she'll tell you with passionate indignation that it just doesn't make sense for people to go hungry in a place where there is such abundance and so many tons of edible food going into landfills.

IMPROVING WORKER RIGHTS AND CONDITIONS

Ayudando Latinos a Soñar - Half Moon Bay, CA. Collaborating with multiple organizations and different public institutions, ALAS brings services and takes care of farmworkers and their families. They deliver groceries and water, coordinate "farmworker Fridays" lunches at rotating farm locations and maintain a Crisis Fund to assist farmworkers and their families in emergency cases and with specific needs, such as medical bills or rent payments.



Douglas Keane - Cyrus Restaurant, Geyserville, CA. In addition to his remarkable culinary accomplishments, Chef Keane is on a mission to transform the restaurant industry by prioritizing the well-

Food & Wine Awards

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being and longevity of the team. Cyrus' business model puts employee satisfaction at the forefront and creating the best experience for both guests AND staff is paramount.

WINE WORLD GAME CHANGERS

Cathy Corison - Corison Winery, St. Helena, CA. Winegrower Cathy Corison produces highly rated Cabernet Sauvignon from Napa Valley benchland vineyards, harvesting her 36th vintage in 2022. The vineyards are certified organic with a number of sustainable and regenerative practices developed over many years to keep the land and its produce healthy, conserve water and use alternative energy.

Steve and Jill Klein Matthiasson - Matthiasson Wines, Napa, CA. Matthiasson Wines is a beacon of sustainability and environmental stewardship and one of the most celebrated biodynamic and organic wine producers in Napa Valley. Self-described as "farmers first," the dedication of Steve and Jill Matthiasson to sustainable practices in agriculture, wine, and viticulture industries has set them apart as exemplary leaders.

Phil Coturri - Winery Sixteen 600, Sonoma, CA. Sometimes called the godfather of organic viticulture in Sonoma County, Coturri farms biodynamic vineyards from western Solano County to the top of Sonoma Mountain, employing more than 150 workers. He tends grapes at Oakville Ranch, Repris, Laurel Glen and



Food & Wine Awards

Honoring Makers and Heroes Who Give Back

A PBS/NPR Fundraiser

Mayacamas Vineyards, among many others. A proud hippie and devoted Grateful Dead fan, he's one of the most respected growers of the last 40 years and his many clients prize his grapes. On learning he'd won this award he exclaimed, "Wow, I'm getting respectable!"

EDUCATING FOR THE FUTURE

Betsy Fischer - Chair, Instructor, Culinary Arts at Santa Rosa Junior College. Betsy's forty-year career includes restaurant management and consulting, wine education, career coaching, and managing non-profit food and wine trade associations. Since 2000, she has been in her dream job as an instructor in the Culinary Arts Program at Santa Rosa Junior College, founded the SRJC Culinary Career Center, and is currently the Chair of the Culinary Arts department.

Karen Luna - Director of Nutrition Services, Santa Clara Unified School District

David Tuttle - Farm Consultant, Santa Clara Unified School District

In the heart of Silicon Valley, Karen Luna and David Tuttle share a sustainable food systems success story with their integrated school district and farm partnership, serving fresh produce from the Santa Clara Unified School District Organic Farm in school meals since 2017. The program is helping students understand how food grows and what it needs to thrive as well as giving students the freshest, healthiest meals possible.



Daniel
Kedan



Jonathan
Bravo

Food & Wine Awards

Honoring Makers and Heroes Who Give Back

A PBS/NPR Fundraiser

Daniel Kedan - Assistant Professor, Culinary Arts at the Culinary Institute of America, Owner/Executive Chef, Backyard, Forestville, CA, Instructor, Wind & Rye Kitchen, Penngrove, CA

While working with a 2-acre restaurant farm, along with a handful of other local farmers and ranchers, Daniel found his home in west Sonoma County. Daniel's passion and skills for the culinary arts, and local sustainability, are held in high regard. He has received high marks from food critics, as well as the community. He is an advocate for local sustainable communities, donating his time to local schools and charities in his community. Daniel's passion and reputation has made him one of the most sought-after chefs in Sonoma County.

Jonathan Bravo - Bilingual Garden Specialist, LandPaths, Santa Rosa, CA. Born in Progreso de O. Hidalgo, Mexico, Jonathan received a B.A. in Mathematics from the Escuela Normal Valle del Mezquital. As Bilingual Garden Specialist at LandPaths, he coordinates programs, family garden allotments, and volunteers at Bayer Farm in Roseland and Jeff Bodwin Community Garden at Andy's Unity Park in southwest Santa Rosa. Jonathan is almost always the inspiring first point of contact for neighbors, harvesters, Free Lunch volunteers, students, and educators at community gardens. Jonathan's work at LandPaths has earned him the love of his students, volunteers and community members, who reached out to enthusiastically nominate him for this Award.

At the event, attendees will enjoy a varied menu of small bites sourced from local farms, try an array of wine, beer and other beverages served by the local producers, and mingle with the Award Winners.

Ceremonies will be hosted this year by Clark Wolf, one of America's top restaurant consultants, food writers and speakers and the host of [Savoring Sonoma](#) on NorCal's NPR station, KRCB 104.9FM, Susan Gilmore, President and CEO of North Bay Children's Center, and Julie Lumgair, noted winemaker, wine industry educational speaker and winner of the inaugural Wine World Game Changers Award at the 2023 event.

For more information, visit [Norcalpublicmedia.org/Awards](https://norcalpublicmedia.org/Awards).

A limited number of press tickets are available on request.

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