



Spotlight on... Joseph Leonardi, CEC

Captain, ACF Culinary National Team USA, and executive chef,
Somerset Club, Boston

By Michelle Whitfield

What does being on Team USA mean to you?

Being on the team is an enormous honor and has been a goal of mine for many years. I always push myself and my staff at work to be better, to constantly push and educate ourselves. It was a way I could prove to myself that I can be a successful chef in the industry. It is also a huge responsibility. We are here for the ACF members and represent the chefs of America. When we compete against other national teams, we represent the skill and dedication of each and every chef in the United States.

You were a member of ACF Culinary Regional Team USA 2008. How is this team experience different?

The members are much younger than in the past, and have a different look at food than I do. It is a great learning experience for me. Practice sessions are more educational, building a foundation and reinforcing the fundamentals. There are more brainstorming sessions, then going into the kitchen and producing what we were thinking. We also work on all programs together. Chef Jilleba [Steve Jilleba, CMC, CCE, AAC, ACF Culinary Team USA manager] has been such an inspiration for me and the team. He is a true leader and mentor for me, as well

as for the other team members. Decisions are made as a team.

How did you find out about ACF Culinary Team USA?

Johnson & Wales University first introduced me to Team USA and pushed me to try out. I was also greatly inspired by the achievements of the previous team. It's been a great pleasure and honor working with them.

When did you first know you wanted to be a chef?

About 25 years ago, I worked in a bakery. I enjoyed watching the customers come in and seeing the expressions on their faces as they looked at the display case. Then, when they found out that I was the person who created the pieces, they showed their appreciation. It made me feel good.

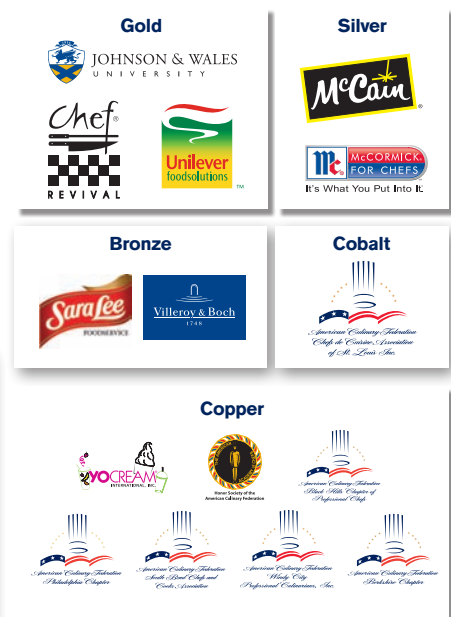
Any last words?

I would like to thank the U.S. Army Culinary Arts Team for its amazing support during the Culinary World Cup in Luxembourg. They not only shipped food and equipment for us, but were also a great help in the kitchen. We worked together as one team to successfully meet the competition deadlines. Being a member of Team USA takes hard work and dedication, but anyone



Michael Kocher Photography

is capable of doing it. I am very lucky to have support from my family, my culinary team at work and my employer. Team has become a big part of my life and has helped shape who I am today. It's so much more than just the team members. Team is about everyone involved, from the coaches and advisors to the apprentices and support staff. We're passionate about cooking and dedicated to winning gold at the "culinary Olympics" for American chefs. We have become friends for life.



JOIN THE JOURNEY

Make a \$50 donation to ACF Culinary Team USA and become part of a 5x6-foot canvas of chef profiles and landmarks highlighting ACF's 2011 event series. Jennifer Garant, famous for her Signature Chefs, will complete the painting during the 2011 ACF National Convention in Dallas, July 23-26. It will be auctioned off, and proceeds will support ACF Culinary Team USA. E-mail a high-resolution photo to academy@acfchefs.net and donate online or send a check to ACF Culinary Team USA, 180 Center Place Way, St. Augustine, FL 32095.