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Omaha Hospitality Hall of Fame to welcome six new inductees

OMAHA, Neb. — The 21st annual Omaha Hospitality Hall of Fame Dinner and Induction Ceremony will be held Sunday, Oct. 19, to celebrate and honor the achievements of some of the best in the Omaha-area food and restaurant industry and to raise scholarship funds for culinary and hospitality students at the Institute for the Culinary Arts at Metropolitan Community College.

The event begins with a reception at 5 p.m. followed by a dinner and program at 6 p.m. at the Swanson Conference Center inside the ICA, 32nd and Sorensen Parkway. Cost is \$76.75 per person.

The Hospitality Hall of Fame was created to recognize achievement and significant contributions in the hospitality industry. This year's inductees are Gayle Carstens, Restaurants Inc.; Dino Losole, Lo Sole Mio Ristorante Italiano; Adi Pour, Douglas County Health Department; Milton Yin, Hiro, Hiro 88 and Imperial Palace; Anthony Abbott, French Café; and Michael Harrison, French Café.

This annual event recognizes industry professionals while providing an opportunity for students, faculty and staff to design, prepare and present the meal. Event proceeds are for the education of students at the ICA.

The Hall of Fame is a collaborative endeavor of the Omaha Restaurant Association and MCC. A committee is comprised of representatives from the restaurant and hospitality industries. Businesses support the event and provide experts to serve on the committee.

For ticket information, call 402-493-4739 or order online at dineoutomaha.com.

Gayle R. Carstens
Founder/president/CEO – Restaurants Inc.

A native Nebraskan, Gayle Carstens has influenced the restaurant scene across the region, beginning his career in 1976 with the second Godfather's Pizza franchise. Carstens then went on to open many other Godfather's locations across the Midwest and eventually partnered with employer Mike Crowley in Godfather's Pizza, Old Country Buffet, Champps Americana and Great American Bagel. After Crowley's passing in 1995, Carstens continued his business partnership with Crowley's wife, Joyce. Eventually he established Restaurants Inc., a restaurant management company based in Omaha.

Carstens' entrepreneurial spirit began with his creation of Stokes Grill & Bar in 1997. He created Loco's Mexican Grill, Brick Oven Cafe & Bakery, Genji Japanese Steakhouse and Twisted Fork Grill & Saloon. He currently partners as a franchisee of HuHot Mongolian Grill — a partnership that has developed 20 locations across the Midwest — as well as eight PepperJax Grill locations and a Smashburger.

In 2013, Carstens was named the recipient of the Eastern Nebraska Hospitality Award by the Nebraska Restaurant Association. He and his wife, Jody, have one daughter, Alyson.

Dino A. Losole

Head chef – Lo Sole Mio Ristorante Italiano

Anthony "Dino" Losole was born to be in the restaurant business. Losole's culinary journey began in the family restaurant business at the young age of 10, and he was later hired at the Field Club of Omaha. After his parents opened Lo Sole Mio Ristorante Italiano, he studied under his father and mastered the art of menu planning, food preparation and presentation before becoming head chef for 18 years.

Losole passed away in 2013 but leaves a lasting legacy in Omaha. He served on the Omaha Restaurant Association board and worked tirelessly with various benefits and organizations, such as Benefit for 9/11, Taste of the Nation, Omaha Food Bank, Open Door Mission and Lydia House, Our Lady of Lourdes and the Omaha South High School Sports Awards Banquet.

Dr. Adi M. Pour

Director – Douglas County Health Department

As director of the Douglas County Health Department since 2002, Adi Pour has employed her passion for community involvement and helping others succeed. A native of Switzerland, Pour attended the University of Nebraska at Omaha and University of Nebraska Medical Center and attained her post-doctorate fellowship at Creighton University.

Pour received the J.G. Elliot Award from UNMC and the Public Service Excellence Award from UNO in 2007. She was also honored at the 2013 Tribute to Women event by the Women's Center for Advancement. She enjoys cooking, reading, skiing and traveling.

Milton S. Yin

Co-founder – Hiro, Hiro 88, Pana 88, Imperial Palace Express

Milton Yin grew up with the influence of a mother who had a passion for great food and a father who owned a restaurant in Korea for 30 years. While Chinese, Yin was born in South Korea and came to the United States in 1976 at the age of 18 to join his father and brother, Danny, who had opened Imperial Palace restaurant. In 1986, Yin and his family created Imperial Palace Express, a fast food-style restaurant that boomed, with other locations opening across Nebraska in Bellevue, Kearney, Norfolk, Grand Island, Fremont and La Vista. Yin continued his culinary journey when he opened Hiro Sushi in 2003. The success of Hiro would lead to Hiro 88 locations in Omaha and Lincoln as well as Pana 88.

Yin has a daughter named Jennifer with his wife, Norma, who has been involved in Yin's restaurant ventures since Imperial Palace. He has actively supported organizations like Project Harmony, Healing Kadi Foundation, March of Dimes and the Siena/Francis House. He enjoys traveling, cooking, working with family and friends, and experiencing new restaurants.

A. Anthony Abbott

Co-owner – French Café

Tony Abbott has touched many lives through his enthusiasm for fine cuisine and love for helping others. Abbott's journey in the restaurant business began when he and his business partner and friend, Michael Harrison, had the opportunity to manage the French Café. In the heart of the Old Market, the restaurant provided Abbott a platform to help others start their own culinary journeys as well as serve customers some of the finest dining in Omaha.

Abbott was the ambassador for the International Institute for Dining Excellence as well as a volunteer with Taste of the Nation, an organization that fights to end childhood hunger. Abbott and his wife, Valerie, reside in Omaha and have two children.

Michael Harrison

Co-owner – French Café

Michael Harrison's worldly travels with friend Tony Abbott helped fuel a passion for fine dining that led the pair to become business partners at the French Café. Harrison's job as maître d'hôtel was a perfect fit, as his outgoing personality and ability to make others feel at home helped the Old Market restaurant become a top dining destination in Omaha.

Harrison served in the U.S. Navy and was a World War II veteran. He passed away in 1992 at the age of 70.

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Metropolitan Community College, accredited by the Higher Learning Commission, is a comprehensive, public community college that offers affordable, quality education to all residents of Dodge, Douglas, Sarpy and Washington counties. Founded in 1974, MCC has the largest enrollment out of six community colleges in Nebraska and is the second largest postsecondary institution in the state. MCC serves more than 40,000 unique credit and noncredit students.