



Air Force's star feeders feted, wooed by execs from talent-hungry industry

By ALAN J. LIDDLE



Staff Sgt. Cinnamon Calloway receives a certificate from chef Ken Waytisek from the Culinary Institute of America, Greystone, during graduation from a weeklong program specifically designed to inspire Air Force foodservice professionals to join the hospitality industry after their military careers. Staff Sgt. Calloway just returned after an extended deployment overseas.

with a culinary tour of duty, in state-of-the-art training kitchens and opportunities to learn about international cuisines, cheeses, olive oils and wines. The retreat also marked the 50th anniversary of the Hennessy Travelers-volunteer food service executives who fly around the world on Air Force planes to visit air bases and honor the service's top culinary operations.

The chef-airmen also had front-row seats for presentations by the accomplished chief executives, who talked about their routes into foodservice, sometimes from unlikely outside industries, and the twists and turns their career paths had taken on their way to becoming corporate leaders.

"What can we do to thank them?" Edward R. Tinsley III, National Restaurant Association chairman, asked during a dinner for the participating CEOs at Etolie, the fine-dining restaurant at the nearby Domaine Chandon winery. "What we can do is to connect them to what our industry is doing today. That's a way to say 'Thank you' and at the same time build a bridge."

ST. HELENA" -- CALIF. (April 16, 2007) -- A recent culinary retreat here in wine country hosted by the National Restaurant Association and Hennessy Travelers Association had the dual purpose of rewarding 50 stars of US Air Force foodservice and whetting their appetites for possible post-military careers in the restaurant industry.

NRA officials, concerned about the need to fill an estimated 2 million new jobs in the industry during the next decade, saw the five-day retreat at the Culinary Institute of America's Greystone campus as an opportunity to recruit outstanding Air Force culinarians. The lectures, demonstrations, tastings and participatory instructional sessions in the CIA's kitchens also were seen as a model for a potential annual retreat for Hennessy Travelers honorees from the Air Force.

The week's activities ended with roundtable discussions with the chefs, which were led by a group of veteran industry chief executives. Those leaders also shared career experiences during panel presentations in the Greystone facility's Ecolab Theater.

American Express, Ecolab and **Ventura Foods** were co-sponsors of the five-day "Hennessy 50 CIA Initiative," which was organized by the NRA and Hennessy Travelers Association. Nation's Restaurant News and Government Food Service were media sponsors.

The event provided the airmen-as both sexes are referred to in that branch of the military-

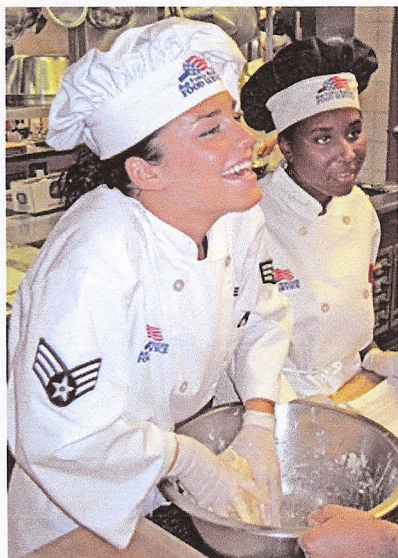


From left: Edward R. Tinsley III, chairman of the National Restaurant Association; LaVerne Warlick, NRA vice president of administration; and Carme Anthony Vacalebre, NRA director and president of the Hennessy Travelers Association

Hennessy Travelers officials expressed a desire to make the bridge-building affair an annual event. The 2008 edition is tentatively planned for the CIA's Hyde Park, N.Y., campus and the 2009 version could be held at a culinary facility, in Texas, they said.

"This is a brilliant cast that surely any industry executive would welcome into their own corporation," Carmen Anthony Vacalebre, president of the San Antonio-based Hennessy Travelers Association, said in describing the airmen attending the Hennessy 50 event. "Our hope is to show them a path for their future, igniting them to join us in the private sector after their Air Force career."

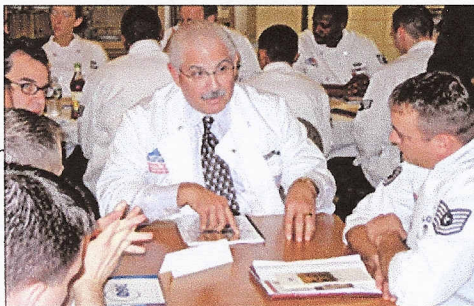
Vacalebre also is chief executive of Carmen Anthony Restaurant Group in Waterbury, Conn.



Kaleigh Marie Chatfield, an Air National Guard chef based in Columbus, Ohio, kneads dough for a Mediterranean recipe the Hennessy 50 chefs learned at the culinary retreat.

The 50 airmen at the Greystone retreat were from far-flung bases and had service careers that ranged from one year to 20. Many have done tours of duty in the Middle East and elsewhere abroad. Their number reflected the 50th anniversary in 2007 of the inaugural presentation of the Hennessy Award for the "best of the best" in single and multisite Air Force feeding operations.

The Hennessy Trophy Awards Program was created by the Hoover Commission set up by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. The NRA has been the program's premier sponsor. NRA officers and representatives of the



Dick Rivera, left, vice chairman of the National Restaurant Association and chief executive of Rubicon Enterprises of Sarasota, Fla., discusses career options with Hennessy Award-winning Air Force chefs during a roundtable at the CIA Greystone culinary retreat.

Society for Foodservice Management and the International Food Service Executives Association annually travel the world with Air Force personnel to evaluate feeding facilities as part of the awards program.

Former Hennessy Award evaluation team members make up the nonprofit Hennessy Travelers Association, whose mission is to support the awards program and Air Force foodservice in general. The association also has created an educational foundation to educate Air Force personnel about the potential job rewards they can reap in private industry.



Participants in the Hennessy 50 CIA Initiative afternoon "CEO Panel" included, from left: Jack Quinn, Ecolab; David Goronkin, Famous Dave's of America Inc.; Jim Broadhurst, Eat'n Park Hospitality Group; Matthew Baizer, Noodle Bar Inc.; Edward R. Tinsley III, National Restaurant Association; Peggy Cherng, Panda Restaurant Group; moderator Richard Martin, Nation's Restaurant News; Carmen Anthony Vacalebre, Carmen Anthony Restaurant Group

According to the NRA and federal labor agencies, the U.S. restaurant industry employs some 12.8 million people, or 9 percent of the national workforce. NRA forecasts indicate the industry will need to fill 2 million new jobs during the next decade, a reflection of the labor challenges operators already face.

An NRA survey said 46 percent of responding quick-service operators and about one-third of full-service operators reported fewer applicants for hourly positions in 2006 than they had two years earlier. Among responding fine-dining operators, 43 percent said it took longer to fill job vacancies last year than it did in 2004. That same difficulty, was reported by 55 percent of the quick-service segment's respondents, the NRA said.

Such forecasts and survey results go a long way to explain the interest among foodservice employers in personnel with foodservice training who are among the estimated 200,000 people leaving the military services each year. Data on the job challenges facing the industry also suggest why the first Hennessy 50 CIA Initiative retreat attracted such prominent industry executives for speaking roles.

Moderated by Nation's Restaurant News executive editor Richard Martin, the CEO roundtables were conducted in two sessions, the first of which included Ted Balestreri, former NRA chairman and co-owner of **The Sardine Factory Inc.**, Monterey, Calif.; John Metz of Metz & Associates, Dallas, Pa.; Pete Mihajlov of **Parasole Restaurant Holdings Inc.**, Edina, Minn.; Dick Rivera, NRA vice chairman and head of Rubicon Enterprises, Sarasota, Fla.; and Sally Smith, leader of **Buffalo Wild Wings International Inc.**, Minneapolis.

Also on that panel was Art Myers, director of Air Force Services at U.S. Air Force headquarters in Washington, D.C.

The second set of CEO panelists were Matthew Baizer of **Zao Noodle Bar Inc.**, San Francisco; Jim Broadhurst of **Eat'n Park Hospitality Group**, Homestead, Pa.; Peggy Cherng of **Panda Restaurant Group**, Rosemead, Calif.; David



California restaurateur Ted Balestreri, former chairman of the National Restaurant Association, offers life lessons to the Hennessy Award-winning Air Force chefs at a session co-led by Peggy Cherng, upper left, chief executive of Panda Restaurant Group.