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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**TWENTY-SEVEN SOMMELIERS ADVANCE TO REGIONAL SEMI-FINALS OF
CHÂINE DES RÔTISSEURS 2017 BEST YOUNG SOMMELIERS COMPETITION**

Young Sommeliers From Nine U.S. Regions Vie For The Title of Best Young Sommelier

Madison, NJ (December 19, 2016) Twenty-seven young sommeliers representing nine regions across the United States advance to the semi-finals in the Chaîne des Rôtisseurs' 2017 Best Young Sommelier Competition. The contestants move forward in the competition after earning the highest scores in the first round online written exam, taken on December 3, 2016. The young sommeliers were tested on their knowledge of all areas of wine, including: wine and wine production, laws, viticulture and vinification, as well as spirits, beers, ales, ciders, ports and sherry.

Hosted annually by the [Chaîne des Rôtisseurs](#), the world's oldest and most distinguished food and wine society, the Young Sommeliers Competition promotes the understanding, appreciation, and enjoyment of fine wines and beverages.

Now in its 17th year, the Best Young Sommelier Competition is the first of its kind in the United States, and is considered one of the most challenging, and highly respected competitions among wine professionals in the nation, says Charles Bennett, Grand Echanson of Chaîne des Rôtisseurs.

"The quality of talent that enters the Young Sommelier Competition increases every year," continued Bennett. "The amount of skill and dedication that these young sommeliers bring to the competition is truly remarkable, and I cannot wait to see how they showcase their unique abilities and areas of expertise in the regional semi-finals these next few months."

The 27 sommeliers aged 21-30 will compete in-person at the regional exams held in one of the Chaîne's nine regions between January and April, 2017. In groups of three, second-round candidates face off in a wine service test and a blind tasting of six wines. One candidate from each of the nine regions will then move on to the National Competition held May 17 through 19, 2017 in Portland, Oregon.

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The National Competition takes place over two days with a one-hour written test, a blind tasting test, and multiple service tests. After these tests, the top three competitors compete to determine the winner in a final set of challenges. Judges of the competition include Masters of Wine, Master Sommeliers, previous national winners, other recognized, accomplished sommeliers, and a small number of Chaîne members with extensive wine knowledge. The day is capped with an awards ceremony and gala dinner.

The national winner then moves on to compete in the International Competition held in Budapest, Hungary September 27 through 29, 2017.

Finalists advancing to the regional competition include:

Northeast Region

Luke Boland, La Sirena Restaurant, NYC

Jhonel Faelnar, NoMad Restaurant, NYC

Matt Whitney, Eastern Standard Kitchen & Drinks Restaurant, Boston, MA

Mid-Atlantic Region

Brandon Anderson, Fiola Mare Restaurant, Washington DC

Jonathan Eichholz, The Riggsby Restaurant, Washington DC

Steve Gullo, Paramour at the Wayne Hotel, PA

South Central Region

Christanna Honer, Southern Season Restaurant, Carrboro, NC

Cameron Hughes, Seasons52 Restaurant, Mobile, AL

Austin McKenna, Blackberry Farm, Walland, TN

Southeast Region

Cassandra Felix, The Breakers/Flagler Steakhouse Restaurant, Palm Beach, FL

William Hendriksen, Scatole Fine Wines, Winter Park, FL

Amanda Joffe, Uvaggio Restaurant, Coral Gables, FL

Midwest Region

Miranda Elliot, Connoisseur Wines, Chicago, IL

Jeffrey Perdue, Jean-Robert's Table Restaurant, Covington, KY

Alex Ring, Spiaggia Restaurant, Chicago, IL

Southwest Region

Sophie Oppelt, Summit at the Broadmoor, Colorado Springs, CO

Melissa Rogers, Doris Metropolitan Restaurant, New Orleans, LA

Adam Toon, Camerata at Paulie's Wine Bar, Houston, TX

Pacific Northwest Region

Robert Lozelle, Ambonnay Restaurant, Portland, OR
Vincent Morrow, Benu Restaurant, San Francisco, CA
Jeremy Shanker, RN74 Restaurant, San Francisco, CA

Far West Region

Molly Brooks, Truly Fine Wine, San Diego, CA
Juan Lizarraga, db Brasserie, Las Vegas, NV
Vlada Stojanov, Les Marchands Wine Bar, Santa Barbara, CA

Hawaii / Pacific Region

Taro Kurobe, Ritz-Carlton Hotel, Honolulu, Hawaii
Ariana Tsuchiya, Alan Wong's Restaurant, Honolulu, Hawaii
Michael Winterbottom, Kalapawai Café, Kailua, Hawaii

About the Chaîne des Rotisseurs

The Confrérie de la Chaîne des Rôtisseurs is the world's oldest, largest and most prestigious food and wine society with 23,000 members worldwide. There are 130 chapters and 6,000 members throughout the United States. Important programs include annual Young Sommelier and Young Chef competitions held both nationally and internationally. Founded in Paris in 1950, the Chaîne's roots reach back to 1248 in France. It is dedicated to honoring the skills and practices of the masters of the culinary arts and those individuals who craft our libations. For additional information: www.chaineus.org.

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