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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**TWENTY-SEVEN SOMMELIERS ADVANCE TO CHÂINE DES RÔTISEURS 2016  
BEST YOUNG SOMMELIERS REGIONAL COMPETITION SEMI-FINALS**

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

**Madison, New Jersey (March 7, 2016)** Twenty-seven young sommeliers representing nine regions across the United States advance to the semi-finals in the Chaîne des Rôtisseurs' 2016 Best Young Sommeliers Competition presented by Moët & Chandon. The contestants move forward in the competition after earning the highest scores in the first round online written exam, conducted on December 5, 2015. The young sommeliers were tested on their knowledge of all areas of wine, including wine and wine production, wine laws, viticulture and vinification, as well as spirits, beers, ports and sherry.

Hosted annually by the [Chaîne des Rôtisseurs](#), the world's oldest and largest food and wine society, the annual competition promotes sommelier education and service contributing to the understanding, appreciation, and enjoyment of fine wines and beverages.

Now in its 16<sup>th</sup> year in the United States, the Chaîne's Young Sommeliers Competition is the oldest competition of its kind, and "is one of the most challenging and highly respected competitions among wine professionals in the nation", says Charles Bennett, Grand Echanson of the Chaîne des Rôtisseurs.

"The quality of talent entering the Young Sommeliers 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."

From January through March, the 27 sommeliers compete in person at the regional exams held in one of the Chaîne's nine regions, based on the competitor's place of employment or residence. In groups of three, candidates face off in a tableside wine service test and a blind tasting of six wines. One candidate from each of the nine regions will move on to the National Competition held April 28 through April 29, 2016 at the Hilton Sonoma, Sonoma Wine Country Hotel in Sonoma, CA.

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The National Competition will take 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. Competition judges include Masters of Wine, Master Sommeliers, previous national winners, other experienced wine professionals, and a small number of Chaîne members with extensive wine knowledge. The final day is capped with an awards ceremony and gala dinner.

The national winner will then move on to compete in the international competition to be held in Vaduz, Liechtenstein on August 25 and 26, 2016.

Semi-finalists now advancing to the regional competitions include:

**Northeast Region**

Luke Boland, La Sirena, NYC  
Christopher Dooley, L’Espalier Restaurant, Boston  
Morgan Harris, Aureole, NYC

**Mid-Atlantic Region**

Renato Bringas, Starr Restaurants, Philadelphia  
Steve Gullo, Paramour at the Wayne Hotel, PA  
Gregory Schwab, La Cuchara, Baltimore

**South Central Region**

Christopher Blanken, Heritage Golf Group, Hilton Head  
Chris Lodge, The Georgian Room, Sea Island, GA  
**Femi Oyediran, Charleston Place Hotel, SC – Regional Winner**

**Southeast Region**

**Jill Davis, Del Frisco’s Double Eagle Steakhouse, Orlando – Regional Winner**  
Adrian Lopez, Zuma Japanese Restaurant, Miami  
Micah Winecoff, Ocean Reef Club, Key Largo, FL

**Midwest Region**

**Miranda Elliot, Maple & Ash, Chicago – Regional Winner**  
Kaleb Kiger, V. Mertz, Omaha  
Alex Ring, Spiaggia Restaurant, Chicago

**Southwest Region**

Nathan Fausti, Dionysus Imports/Rosenthal Wines, Austin, TX  
Austin Heidt, Frasca Food & Wine, Boulder, CO  
**Lindsay Thomas, Camerata at Paulie’s, Houston – Regional Winner**

**Pacific Northwest Region**

Camille Berry, San Francisco

Vincent Morrow, Gary Danko, San Francisco

**Martin Sheehan-Stross, Michael Mina, San Francisco, CA – *Regional Winner***

**Far West Region**

Molly Brooks-Thornton, Banker's Hill Bar & Restaurant, San Diego

Juan Lizarraga, db Brasserie, Las Vegas

**Jessica Waugh, Gordon Ramsay Steak, Las Vegas – *Regional Winner***

**Hawaii / Pacific Region**

Jessica Austin, Princeville Wine Market, Hawaii

Taro Kurobe, Neiman Marcus, Hawaii

Jordan Painter, Young's Market, Hawaii – ***Regional Winner***

**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 more than 24,000 members worldwide. There are 125 chapters and about 6,000 members throughout the United States. Important programs include annual Young Sommeliers and Young Chefs 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](http://www.chaineus.org).

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