# Awards, Invitationals, Raffles

### Awards Voting

Who do you think is Maryland's best chef? How about favorite bar or best new restaurant? The Restaurant Association of Maryland's Stars of the Industry Awards are open for voting beginning March 8 and running through March 29. This is your opportunity to weigh in on who should be recognized for excellence and win these statewide categories:

- Chef of the Year
- Favorite New Restaurant (open two years or less)
- Favorite Restaurant
- Wine & Beverage Program of the Year
- Craft Brew Program of the Year
- Favorite Bar or Tavern
- Heart of the Industry Award for Outstanding Employees

To place your vote, go to: marylandrestaurants.com/gala or "Like" your favorite on the Restaurant Association of Maryland Facebook page. The winners will be announced live at the RAM Gala April 30 at the Renaissance Baltimore Harborplace Hotel.

### Maryland ProStart Student Invitational

On March 16 hundreds of high school students from across the state will be heading to the Hyatt Regency Baltimore to compete in a team culinary and foodservice management competition, vying for scholarship money and the opportunity to represent Maryland at the National ProStart Invitational in April. There will also be a hospitality career fair running simultaneously for employers to meet with students and other potential new employees.

Teams of students will have one hour to make a three course meal that will be judged on taste, originality, food safety, teamwork and proper cooking techniques. Not only do they have to beat the clock, they have to impress a panel of judges from the industry and leading culinary schools across the country.

Not to be overlooked, teams of students will also be tasked with creating a new restaurant concept from scratch. Students will have worked for months in advance to build their concept from restaurant design, menu, food costing, employee needs, marketing plans and more. They then bring those plans and present to a panel of industry judges trying to convince them to invest in the new concept.

Social media is such a large part of marketing and advertising strategies today that an entire section of the competition has been dedicated to it. Student teams will be given a restaurant concept and budget and then have to create a social media strategy to increase restaurant sales. Judges from the foodservice industry will decide who has the most creative and effective approach.

For more information about the Maryland ProStart Student Invitational or the Career Fair, contact Jessica Waller (jwaller@marylandrestaurants.com) or call 410-290-6800.

### Annual Car Raffle

Back again and as good as ever, your chance to win a 2017 Corvette Stingray or $45,000 cash option. Tickets are $300 each with only 300 tickets to be sold. Take a chance on winning the big prize and support the Restaurant Association of Maryland Education Foundation at the same time. Go to marylandrestaurants.com now to purchase a ticket online or 410-290-6800. The drawing will be held on April 30 during the RAM Awards Gala at the Renaissance Baltimore Harborplace Hotel. Winner need not be present to win, but it would sure be nice to accept your prize in front of more than 600 people!

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**MARSHALL WESTON** is president and CEO of the Restaurant Association of Maryland.

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