



Annual Scottish Chefs Report

Year ending December 2025

By

Kevin MacGillivray, Chief Executive

Scottish Culinary Championships at ScotHot 2025



The Scottish culinary scene continues to thrive and nowhere was this more evident than at the Scottish Culinary Championships, held during ScotHot 2025. This year's event proved to be one of the most successful to date, bringing together an inspiring mix of seasoned professionals and emerging talent from across the country.

A highlight of the Championships was the visit from Mairi Gougeon MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands. A long-standing supporter of the Scottish Culinary Team, her presence reinforced the importance of the hospitality sector within Scotland's wider economy and cultural identity.

A Showcase of Skill and Creativity

With over 250 chefs competing across senior, junior, and open categories, the energy across the Live Theatre and Skills Arena was electric from start to finish. The Culinary Arts Display further demonstrated the breadth of talent within the industry, featuring everything from intricate chocolate

showpieces to delicate floral sugar craft and contemporary food photography.

Standards were exceptionally high, with judges awarding multiple gold medals alongside silver, bronze, and merit recognitions. The competition not only celebrated technical excellence but also creativity, innovation, and passion for the craft.

The most anticipated awards of the event did not disappoint. David Millar was named Scottish Chef of the Year 2025, while Oliver Redgwell-Welch earned the title of Scottish Young Chef of the Year. Both winners exemplified the skill and dedication that define Scotland's culinary future.

Infusion Lunch Club

In 2025 we launched the Scottish Chefs Lunch Club in association with Nespresso Professional, this was a new initiative designed to bring Scottish hospitality together. We had some fantastic lunches at Margo, Prestonfield & The Gannet in Glasgow. Thanks to our host chefs, Robin Aitken, John McMahon & Peter McKenna.

22nd Annual Scottish Chefs Golf Day

This took place at the Loch Lomond Carrick course on the 20th October – later than normal as it had to be rescheduled due to a severe storm in August. Thanks again to our sponsors, Kevan Jack from Aaroc and James Newton from Newton First.

For 2026 we have decided to move the golf day to Marr Hall Golf & Spa Resort which will take place on Monday 3rd August.

Nespresso Afternoon Tea Challenge

Supporting emerging talent remains a key focus, highlighted by the continued success of the Nespresso Professional Annual Student Coffee Challenge. Held at Edinburgh College's Milton Campus, the competition challenged students to showcase the versatility of coffee through a refined

Afternoon Tea concept. The winners were Hayley Graham, Kerry Ann Green and Magdalena Stepnik from New College Lanarkshire.

A New Era for the Scottish Culinary Team

After a successful period of 10 years Orry Shand and Craig Palmer have stepped aside from the Culinary Team. I personally would like to acknowledge their contribution. Orry is shortly going to open his own restaurant, and I am sure it will be a great success, on behalf of the board of management I would like to take this opportunity to wish him every success.

2025 has also marked a period of transition for the Scottish Culinary Team. Under the leadership of newly appointed Team Manager David Lilley, and with David Millar stepping into the role of Team Captain, the team is entering an exciting new chapter.

The countdown to one of the world's most prestigious culinary events is officially underway.

Held every four years, the **Culinary World Cup** in Luxembourg brings together professionals from across gastronomy and hospitality to honour the art, innovation, and future of cooking.

Team Scotland Leadership & Line-Up

Representing Scotland is an outstanding team of culinary professionals:

- **John Munro** – Balmoral Hotel, Edinburgh
- **Craig Cooper** – Wild Thyme
- **Tony Fakhoury** - Wild Thyme
- **David Millar, *Team Captain*** – Executive Chef, Carlowrie Castle, and current **Scottish Chef of the Year**
- **Andrew Clark** – Entier
- **Ernesto Di Cunzolo** – Fonab Castle
- **David Lilley, *Team Manager*** – Executive Chef, Hotel W

- **Rory Taylor – Entier**

David Millar has been involved with the Senior Team for several years and now steps into the role of **Team Captain**. Speaking about the appointment, David said he is “honoured and extremely excited to lead the team at such a prestigious competition”. He added that the team has been working intensively on developing innovative concepts for both the **Chef’s Table** and the **Restaurant of Nations**, as preparations for Luxembourg 2026 gather momentum.

Infusion Magazine

Beyond competition, the Scottish Chefs organisation continues to foster connection and collaboration across the industry. Its award-winning magazine, *Infusion*, remains a respected publication, offering in-depth coverage of culinary trends, insights, and achievements. With two issues published annually and distributed internationally, it continues to strengthen Scotland’s presence on the global culinary stage. A special thanks to Chloe Black of Scottish Chefs & Karen Nisbet from Arken for the outstanding job they do in bringing the magazine together.

Home Nations

Collaboration extends beyond Scotland through initiatives such as the Home Nations partnership, which brings together culinary associations from across the UK under the Worldchefs umbrella. With new initiatives including the first World Chefs Golf Day at the Celtic Manor which hosts the 2026 World Chefs Congress, hosted by the Welsh Culinary Association, as well as a Home Nations Dinner cooked by culinary team members from all home nations. The partnership is helping to strengthen relationships and create new opportunities for chefs at all levels.

Young Chef Ambassadors

The Young Chef Ambassador (YCA) programme continues to play a key role in this international engagement. With opportunities to attend global events, and engage with peers worldwide, the programme is helping

develop young chefs with various educational events throughout the year including farm visits, butchery demonstrations. In October Lauren Laird was present at the European Presidents meeting in Belgrade, Serbia and we have also committed to taking two YCAs to the World Chefs Congress in May.

We have also committed to bring two YCAs to the Culinary World Cup Luxembourg to develop their knowledge and education at a major culinary competition

North East Chef of The Year

Closer to home, the North East of Scotland Chef and Restaurant of the Year competition once again highlighted the exceptional talent within the region. Organised by Hospitality Training Aberdeen, the event celebrated both established professionals and rising stars.

A special recognition award was presented to Joe Queen of Archerfield House Hotel, honouring his longstanding contribution to supporting young chefs and promoting excellence within the industry.

Looking Ahead

A proposal has been put forward to appoint Neil as Chairman of the Board, reflecting his senior founding member of Scottish Chefs and his involvement within role in sponsor engagement, government relations, and strategic development. This change aligns with governance models seen across similar organisations and aims to strengthen representation at board level.

Thank you to all board members for their contribution over the last 12 months, as we all know the hard work we all put into the running of the association is all done on a voluntary basis.