

Chef Grant Achatz and Nick Kokonas – Outstanding Community Leaders

Chef -

Achatz's early culinary career included time spent working in his parents' Michigan restaurants as a teenager, followed by enrollment in The Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York. Following graduation, Achatz landed a position at Thomas Keller's highly acclaimed restaurant, The French Laundry, in Yountville, California. Achatz spent four years at The French Laundry, rising to the position of sous chef. In 2001, he moved to the Chicago area to become the Executive Chef at Trio, in Evanston, Illinois, which at the time of his arrival had a four-star rating from the Mobil Travel Guide. Over the next three years, with Achatz at the helm, Trio's reputation soared, and in 2004 the restaurant was rewarded with a fifth star from Mobil, becoming one of just 13 restaurants so honored at the time.

In 2005, Achatz went out on his own, opening Alinea in Chicago's Lincoln Park neighborhood. The restaurant is located up the block from the famed Steppenwolf Theatre Company and is housed in a modest gray brick building which bears no external markings beyond its street number. Inside, the restaurant has no bar, no lobby, and seats just 64 guests. Achatz serves diners a small-course tasting menu, running approximately 18 courses. After less than two years of operation, the Mobil Travel Guide bestowed its Five Star Award on Alinea, making Alinea one of just 16 restaurants nationwide to rate five stars for 2007.

In October 2006, *Gourmet* magazine named Alinea the best restaurant in America in its feature on "America's Top 50 Restaurants".

In 2007, *Restaurant* magazine added Alinea to its list of the 50 best restaurants in the world at number 36, the highest new entry of the year. In 2008, that publication moved Alinea up its list 15 spots, to number 21 in the world. Alinea cracked the top ten in 2009, moving up to number 10 in the world, and advanced to number 7 for 2010, when it was also the highest ranked North American restaurant honored. Alinea maintained its top North American Ranking for 2011, while moving up one position overall to 6th best restaurant in the world. In 2012, Alinea came down one spot on the list. Per Se gained the 6th place, thus making Alinea the 2nd best restaurant in the U.S. and 7th overall.

In November 2009, Achatz and his Alinea team designed the menu for Ikarus, a restaurant in Salzburg, Austria which brings in a top chef from a different restaurant each month to design the menu for that month and train the staff.

Alinea was awarded three stars in the 2011 Michelin Guide for Chicago. It was repeated in 2012 when Alinea was the only restaurant to receive three stars in the 2012 Michelin Guide for Chicago.

Achatz's other restaurants include Next, a restaurant that uses a unique ticketing system in Chicago, and Aviary, a bar.

Nick -

Nick Kokonas is a managing partner of Achatz LLC, formed to envision, create, and manage Alinea. Together with Grant Achatz, Nick coordinated the creation of Alinea, including the formation and execution of the business plan, hiring of all professional trades, and management of ongoing operations. Prior to his involvement with Alinea, Nick spent over a decade as a derivatives trader, founding his own proprietary trading firm in 1994. Concurrent to his trading activities, Nick has been an investor in, and advisor to, a number of mid-size technology firms, and currently serves on several corporate boards. Nick holds a BA in Philosophy from Colgate University.