

## **Eric Rivera**

**Alabama Chef of the Year 2022** – Alabama Restaurant & Hospitality Association  
**Culinary Instructor & CHIVE Culinary Incubator Manager** – Auburn University

Chef Eric Rivera is known for crafting simple, seasonal dishes with distinctive ingredients and bold, thoughtful flavors. Named **2022 Alabama Chef of the Year** by the Alabama Restaurant & Hospitality Association's Best Awards, Chef Eric has earned wide acclaim for both his culinary talent and community impact.

He currently serves as a Culinary Instructor and Manager of the CHIVE Culinary Incubator at Auburn University, where he mentors the next generation of hospitality professionals. His commitment to culinary excellence and sustainability has garnered national recognition, including features in *PBS NewsHour*, *USA Today*, *The New York Times*, *Forbes*, and *Newsweek*.

Chef Eric has also played a key role in international culinary diplomacy through his involvement in a culinary and arts exchange between Montgomery, Alabama, and its sister city, Pietrasanta, Italy.

During his tenure as Executive Chef with Vintage Hospitality Group, his restaurants received numerous accolades and National recognition under his leadership for sustainability and innovation, including honors from the James Beard Foundation, OpenTable, and TripAdvisor.

In 2023, the Montgomery Business Journal also named Chef Eric an **MGM Impact Maker** for his contributions to the local community and hospitality industry.

Chef Eric is passionate about giving back. He donates his time and talent to various nonprofits and serves as a judge for **ProStart**, a high school program that introduces students to careers in hospitality. Eric has also been awarded for his commitment to Auburn's Eagles Program as **2025's Outstanding Independent Living Partner**.

Outside the kitchen, Eric enjoys home improvement projects, golfing, fishing, and spending time with his three children: Carter, Lorelai, and Emma.