



NATGA Congress 2026
June 14-17, Flamingo Resort
Santa Rosa, CA

Speaker Bios

Alessandra Zambonelli

Professor Alessandra Zambonelli is a distinguished mycologist and Full Professor of Botany in the Department of Agricultural and Food Sciences at the University of Bologna, Italy. A global expert in truffle biology, ecology, and cultivation, she has authored more than 200 scientific publications and books, including *Taming the Truffle: The History, Lore, and Science of the Ultimate Mushroom*. Her research focuses on truffles, ectomycorrhizas, forest fungi, and *Tuber magnatum*.

Christian Ehret

Christian Ehret is part of the family team behind Ehret Family Winery and Bavarian Lion Vineyards in Knights Valley, Sonoma County, California. The Ehret family estate encompasses approximately 1,800 acres at the base of Mt. St. Helena and has been farmed for Bordeaux grape varieties since 1996. Christian works with his family on the estate, which includes vineyard operations and a developing truffle orchard, bringing a grower's perspective to specialty agriculture, land stewardship, and emerging North American truffle production.

Raúl Deoiz

Raúl Deoiz is a truffle grower, trainer, and founder of Trufdog, based in Tabuena, Zaragoza, one of Spain's important black truffle regions. Raised in a farming family and involved in truffle production from a young age, Raúl combines traditional Spanish truffle-growing knowledge with advanced truffle-dog training methods. He holds a Master's degree in Environmental Science and works with growers throughout Spanish truffle country on sustainable cultivation, harvesting practices, and dog-assisted truffle detection.

Erik Anderson

Chef Erik Anderson is the chef-owner of ILORA and has built a career defined by technical precision, creativity, and highly regarded tasting-menu restaurants. Raised in Chicago, he began his professional career at The French Laundry before working at acclaimed restaurants including Auriga, Sea Change, Noma, and The Catbird Seat. At The Catbird Seat in Nashville, his work earned national attention, including recognition from Bon Appétit, GQ, and Food & Wine, which named him one of its Best New Chefs. Anderson later earned two Michelin stars as executive chef of Coi in San Francisco and served as opening chef of Truss at the Four Seasons in Napa Valley.

Ann Scanlan

Ann Scanlan serves as Vice President of NATGA and leads the association's Research and Development Task Force. She owns a truffle orchard in the mountains of Southern California. Before focusing full



time on truffles, Ann founded Herzan, a company specializing in vibration and acoustic isolation for high-resolution imaging, which she later sold to employees. She now devotes much of her time to truffle growing, research collaboration, and NATGA initiatives.

Mark Coleman

Mark Coleman is a professor at the University of Idaho and a key figure in the TRAPI — Truffle Research and Production Initiative — project. His expertise includes forest production, forest ecology, and ectomycorrhizal water relations. Through TRAPI, Mark is helping coordinate collaborative North American research on truffle cultivation, with a focus on improving production, optimizing orchard conditions, and supporting sustainable truffle farming practices.

Scott Oneto

Scott Oneto has served as a University of California Cooperative Extension farm advisor for more than 20 years, working with growers in the Sierra Nevada foothill counties. He provides education through consultations, workshops, field days, and publications. His research has focused on invasive weed control, rangelands, carbon sequestration, and, more recently, truffle production. Scott is working with local truffle growers and supporting research efforts to better understand the emerging truffle industry.

Margaret Townsend

Margaret Townsend is the owner of NewTown Truffiere in southern Kentucky, a 25-acre, 4,800-tree orchard established in 2011 to produce Périgord truffles, *Tuber melanosporum*. She harvested her first truffle in 2018 and has expanded her work to include agritourism, guided truffle hunts, education, and grower collaboration. Following a leadership career in engineering and technology, Margaret now works with researchers and growers to help establish truffle production as a viable North American specialty crop. She is completing a two-year term as NATGA President and will remain active on the board.

Rafael Roviroso

Rafael Roviroso is President of Roviroso Farms and steward of his family's Southern New Mexico farming operation, including Stahmann's Pecans. His work focuses on developing high-quality truffle-inoculated trees and creating new opportunities for farmers to diversify with high-value, sustainable crops. With a background in mathematics and physics, Rafael brings a data-driven approach to agricultural innovation, climate adaptation, and long-term land stewardship.



Ximena Zamacona

Ximena Zamacona is Managing Partner at Roviroso Farms and a cultivation strategist specializing in fungal biology, truffle orchard development, and controlled biological systems. She previously founded Full Circle Mushrooms, where she built and operated a commercial mushroom cultivation business focused on fungal systems, environmental controls, and crop-cycle management. Ximena holds a bachelor's degree in chemistry with a minor in Agriculture from the Universidad Autónoma de Querétaro and brings a practical, science-based approach to truffle nursery production and orchard strategy.

Brian Upchurch

Brian Upchurch is a former President of NATGA and remains active in the association. A professional horticulturist, he owned and operated a wholesale specialty nursery for 30 years before starting Carolina Truffières with his son, Davis. Carolina Truffières offers several species of truffle-inoculated trees and maintains a trial orchard evaluating pruning strategies, weed management, and alternative host tree species.

Aziz Türkoğlu

Dr. Aziz Türkoğlu is a mycology professor and truffle researcher specializing in truffle taxonomy, ecology, genetics, and cultivation. He founded the Truffle Application Center at Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University and completed postdoctoral research with James Trappe. Now based in the Pacific Northwest, he teaches and conducts research at the University of Washington and coordinates the Mycology Program at The Evergreen State College. Through Alpine Truffle LLC, he applies truffle science to commercial cultivation and supports truffle research and education through the James Trappe National Truffle Institute.

Ken Fry

Ken Fry is President of Eagle Truffles at Homer Fry Ranch in Eagle, Idaho, home of Eagle Truffles™ and Eagle Honey™. The Fry family has farmed in Eagle since the late 1800s, and Ken is part of the growing community of North American truffle growers working to establish European truffle production in the United States. His orchard has produced Tuber borchii, and he has been active in grower education and industry collaboration. Ken is also a member of NATGA's Research Task Force.

Dustin Valette

Chef Dustin Valette is chef-owner of Valette, The Matheson, Roof 106, and Valette Wines in Healdsburg, California. A graduate of the Culinary Institute of America at Hyde Park, he trained in acclaimed kitchens including Charles Nob Hill, La Folie, Gary Danko, Aqua, Bouchon, and the Mandarin Oriental Honolulu. In 2015, he opened Valette with his brother Aaron Garzini in the former bakery once operated by their great-grandfather. He later opened The Matheson and Roof 106, both of which have received Michelin recognition and Wine Spectator Awards of Excellence. As a chef-vintner, Dustin also founded Valette Wines in collaboration with acclaimed winemakers.



Ken Frank

Chef Ken Frank is chef-owner of La Toque in Napa Valley and an early pioneer of seasonally driven fine dining. He first gained national attention in 1977 as the 21-year-old chef of La Guillotine and later served as the original opening chef at Michael's in Santa Monica, a landmark in the development of California cuisine. In 1979, he opened the first La Toque on the Sunset Strip, later relocating the restaurant to Napa Valley. Known for his commitment to seasonal ingredients, hospitality, and thoughtful wine pairings, Ken continues to lead La Toque in downtown Napa's Oxbow District.

Douglas Keane

Douglas Keane is chef and co-owner of Cyrus in Geyserville, California. Originally from Michigan, he developed an early passion for cooking and went on to build one of California's most acclaimed fine-dining careers. Cyrus first opened in 2004 and earned national recognition, including two Michelin stars, four stars from the San Francisco Chronicle, and a James Beard Award for Best Chef Pacific. In 2022, Keane reopened Cyrus in Alexander Valley, continuing his culinary philosophy rooted in refined simplicity, precision, and respect for ingredients. Outside the kitchen, he is deeply involved in dog rescue and rehabilitation through the Green Dog Rescue Project.