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THE WHITE HOUSE
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

# NEW Digital Exhibit
# Explores the Legacy of White House Executive Chefs
*Created with Support from New York University*

**November 10, 2026 (Washington D.C.)** – The nonprofit, nonpartisan White House Historical Association today debuted a new digital exhibit, *Culinary Diplomats: The Gastronomic Legacy of White House Executive Chefs (1961-2024),* which explores the position of White House executive chef and the leaders who elevated the White House dining experience and shaped its culinary traditions.




The exhibit is the result of a semester-long internship offered by the White House Historical Association to support the work of an NYU Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development student. The 2026 internship recipient, Ethan McNamara, worked closely with the Association's David M. Rubenstein National Center for White House History and its Digital Archives team to develop the exhibit.

"*Culinary Diplomats* is a fascinating slice of White House history that highlights the people that have kept the presidents and their guests well fed," said Matthew Costello, Chief Education Officer and Director of the David M. Rubenstein National Center for White House History. "There is so much thought that goes into every dish served at the White House and this exhibit gives you a much closer look into the minds behind the dishes."

McNamara's exhibit, *Culinary Diplomats: The Gastronomic Legacy of White House Executive Chefs (1961-2024)*, highlights executive chefs as fine dining extraordinaries and home cooks for their respective first families, adapting their culinary skills to presidential palates. Through history, White House chefs have brought their own approaches and influences to dining at the Executive Mansion, preparing memorable meals for diplomatic engagements, beloved dishes that carry on traditions, and daily meals that bring the household together.

"I deeply enjoyed my time working on this digital exhibit. It was fascinating to watch food culture at the White House evolve throughout the mid-20th to early 21st century," said McNamara. "Each of these chefs influenced the presidency in more ways than one might think."

Ethan McNamara recently earned an M.A. from NYU Steinhardt's Department of Media, Culture, and Communication. He also holds a B.A. in American Studies from Skidmore College and served as vice president of NYU's Student Association for the Masters in Media. His passion for cooking began at a young age when he helped his father prepare Thanksgiving dinner and continues today as he regularly cooks for friends and loved ones.

McNamara's internship spans January through November 2026.

McNamara will also be a guest on the Association's **White House History Live** virtual program which delves into the stories that make up the history of the Executive Mansion. McNamara will share an in-depth look at his exhibit on **Tuesday, Nov. 10 on Facebook Live at 5:30 PM EST.**

For more information on the White House Historical Association, please visit www.whitehousehistory.org.

**About NYU Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development**
Located in the heart of New York City's Greenwich Village, NYU's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development prepares students for careers in the arts, education, health, media, and psychology. Since its founding in 1890, the Steinhardt School's mission has been to expand human capacity through public service, global collaboration, research, scholarship, and practice. To learn more about NYU Steinhardt, visit steinhardt.nyu.edu.

**About The White House Historical Association**

Founded in 1961 by First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy, the White House Historical Association is the nonprofit, nonpartisan organization entrusted with preserving and sharing the history of the White House. Supported entirely by private philanthropy and the sale of educational books and products, the Association reaches millions of students, teachers, and lifelong learners through research and scholarship initiatives, public programming, and the authoritative titles published by its independent press. Throughout each presidency, the Association works with the Offices of the First Lady and the White House Curator to acquire and preserve historic objects for the White House Fine and Decorative Arts Collection. The Association also operates The People's House: A White House Experience, a free, immersive, educational museum in Washington, D.C., which welcomes hundreds of thousands of visitors annually. To learn more about the White House Historical Association, please visit WhiteHouseHistory.org.

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