



2025

# MEMBERSHIP OVERVIEW

*Bringing people and businesses together.*

**JOIN US.**

“

# MISSION STATEMENT:

Founded in 1914, the Illinois Restaurant Association is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting, protecting, educating, and improving the restaurant industry in Illinois.

”

\*We are Illinois' second largest private sector employer

ILLINOIS



RESTAURANT  
ASSOCIATION



# IN TUNE WITH OUR INDUSTRY

We help the hospitality industry thrive. Period. The Illinois Restaurant Association is the largest, most active resource for the Restaurant, Bar and Hospitality Industry in the State of Illinois. In addition to legislative advocacy, we provide access to cost saving programs, networking events, referrals, educational seminars and webinars, marketing opportunities, certification classes, and a distinguished board of nationally-recognized restaurant, hospitality and bar operators. We ensure that you stay connected to the pulse of the industry.

"The resources and relationships have blown me away. The networking has been invaluable, and the support from the IRA has helped us stay ahead of industry challenges."

- Jodi Fyfe, CEO The Paramount Group



*At a Glance*

**26,543**

RESTAURANT LOCATIONS  
IN ILLINOIS

**\$42.6 BIL**

IN SALES

**\$2.30**

IS CONTRIBUTED TO THE  
STATE ECONOMY FOR  
EVERY \$1 DOLLAR SPENT

**586,100**

RESTAURANT AND  
FOODSERVICE JOBS;  
10% OF TOTAL JOBS  
IN THE STATE

**95%**

OF RESTAURANTS  
HAVE FEWER THAN  
50 EMPLOYEES

# ADVOCACY

The Illinois Restaurant Association is the voice on issues that matter to your business. Join us to build on this progress.



## Past

- Brought back Happy Hour to Illinois
- Helped secure the approval of \$50 million in grants for restaurants in the 2022 Illinois state budget
- Passed "Cocktails-To-Go"
- Protected the state's Tip Credit during minimum wage negotiations
- Repealed the Cook County Soda Tax
- Secured restaurant exemption from the Chicago Bag Tax
- Helped reform the Payment Protection Program (PPP) to make it more accessible to small businesses
- Advocated and secured a second round of PPP for the hospitality community
- Instrumental in securing the Restaurant Revitalization Fund (RRF)

## Present

- Preserved the Tip Credit at the state level in Illinois, saving restaurants 20-40% in labor costs
- Stopped the property tax increase in Chicago, saving \$300 million
- Stopped the proposed alcohol tax increase in Chicago, saving \$10.6 million
- Excluded restaurants from the Federal Trade Commission's final rule on "junk fees", saving the industry \$3.5 billion, or about \$4,800 per restaurant location
- Helped pass the Interchange Fee Prohibition Act, which eliminates swipe fees on sales tax and gratuity
- Enacted changes to BIPA legislation that reduced overall fines for violations

## Future

- Continuously working to save the Illinois Tip Credit
- Working to pass an Anti-Piracy that would make it illegal for unauthorized third-parties to sell reservations to customers
- Repeal sunset on "Cocktails-To-Go"
- Advocate for pro growth policies at local, state and federal levels
- Maintain strong relationships with elected officials and regulators
- At the table on any hospitality issues on the city and state level

### LOBBY DAYS IN SPRINGFIELD AND WASHINGTON, D.C.

Members are invited to visit Springfield and Washington DC with other restaurateurs from Illinois to discuss and advocate on issues that have an impact on the industry.

### POLITICAL ACTION CAMPAIGN

Help us build on victories from the past by investing in our success in the future through a contribution to the IRA PAC. Contributing a meaningful investment helps drive the growth and vitality of the hospitality industry. For more information contact [adeguide@illinoisrestaurants.org](mailto:adeguide@illinoisrestaurants.org).



# MEMBERSHIP



*Bringing people and businesses together.*

**JOIN US.**

## MEMBERS JOIN FOR MANY DIFFERENT REASONS:

- Advocacy and Representation
- Industry Updates and Resources
- Networking Opportunities
- Training and Educational Programs
- Discounts and Preferred Pricing
- Marketing Support and Recognition

We are a community of trusted thought leaders dedicated to the growth and advancement of the restaurant, bar, and hospitality industry in Illinois. There is strength in numbers - joining IRA pledges your support to the food service and restaurant industry.

## OUR MEMBERS

**Operator members include:** chef driven concepts, fine dining, bars, event venues, food trucks, caterers, banquet halls, airport concessions, fast casual, and more.

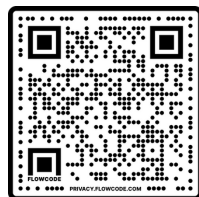
**Associate members include:** product and service suppliers, distributors, lawyers, accountants, tech companies, insurance brokers, and more.

**It's been our mission for over 100 years to provide unparalleled support for our members, and to strengthen our industry now and in the future.**

## HOW DO I JOIN?

**Joining is easy!**

Scan to join today or go online at [illinoisrestaurants.org](http://illinoisrestaurants.org).



Scan to Join



## BENEFITS

### DISCOUNTS ON CERTIFICATION CLASSES AND TRAINING PRODUCTS

The IRA offers mandated food safety and responsible alcohol certification trainings with tuition discounts available for IRA.

### DUAL MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the Illinois Restaurant Association includes a membership in the National Restaurant Association.

### COST SAVINGS THROUGH IRA ENDORSED PROGRAMS

Through IRA Endorsed Programs, suppliers to the foodservice industry offer valuable members-only savings on everyday expenses, such as: health care, music licensing, credit card and payroll processing, energy bills, insurance, uniforms, and more.

### EDUCATIONAL SEMINARS AND WEBINARS

The IRA hosts a variety of webinars and seminars on pressing issues facing our industry

### EXPERT REFERRALS

Membership provides access to industry experts in a variety of fields from HR, law, food safety, PR, insurance, accounting, and more.

### MEMBERSHIP EVENTS

The IRA regularly hosts an array of membership events from small gatherings to extravagant festivals. There are also many committees to become a part of.

### CONNECTIONS TO THE NEXT GENERATION OF CULINARY LEADERS

IRA members can mentor and hire ProStart® students through the IRA Educational Foundation (IRAEF).



# ENDORSED PARTNERS



The IRA's endorsed partners are fully vetted and endorsed companies provided benefits exclusive to our members.

## **ServSafe**

## **Discounts**

IRA members receive discounts on certification classes, and all ServSafe training products.

## **National Restaurant Association Show**

## **Discount**

IRA Operator members includes membership in the National Restaurant Association, giving you access to an extensive network of industry peers and **a complimentary expo ticket** to the annual NRA Show held in Chicago every May.

## **Adesso Capital**

## **Cash In Hand**

Already received ERC? You may qualify for a refund of FICA taxes paid on tipped wages. See if you qualify. Adesso will navigate you through this process, file for you, ensuring you receive the money owed.

## **ARAMARK**

## **Preferred Pricing & Discounts**

ARAMARK offers the total solution: rental, lease, and direct sale, or any combination of these options, for a customized single-source solution for your company. Members receive rental discounts of up to 20%, and 10% off all direct sale catalog rates.

## **BMI Music**

## **Discounts**

IRA members receive up to 20% off music licensing fee from BMI. If you are currently paying fees and have not informed BMI you're a IRA member, visit their portal today.

## **C-SOAP**

## **Discounts**

C-SOAP sells, leases and leases-to-own high quality, low-energy dishmachines from American manufacturers. IRA members receive a 10% discount on the first 12 months of their lease.

## **EMPLOYERS®**

## **Cost Savings**

EMPLOYERS is an exclusive partner of the IRA, providing workers' compensation insurance and services to our members through a network of independent insurance agents. IRA members receive up to a 5% Credit on their EMPLOYERS workers' compensation policy.

## **HUB International**

## **Preferred Pricing**

HUB's team of hospitality risk professionals will help you develop a restaurant insurance and risk management program that protects against physical property catastrophes or damages, covers your liability in the event of lawsuits for injury, and insulates you from other events that could disrupt your business or harm your restaurant's good name.

## **IGS Energy**

## **Discounts**

As a local, family-owned supplier, we know your market, and by taking advantage of the free energy audit available to IRA members, we can create a customized energy solution for your business.

## **Heartland Payment Systems**

## **Discounts**

A IRA partner for over a decade, Heartland can support your credit card processing and payroll needs. Heartland offers exclusive discounts on all services to IRA members.

## **J&J Gaming**

## **Cash In Hand**

J&J can maximize your potential in video gaming no matter where you're at with gaming in your establishment! They will provide all necessary up front and ongoing guidance at no cost and without strings attached in addition to a multitude of services. J&J partners on average earn an additional \$20,000 annually.

## **United Healthcare**

## **Preferred Pricing**

One of our national-level benefits, the restaurant insurance trust offers a variety of healthcare options to provide your employees insurance. Choose from a range of innovative products and services to meet the diverse needs of restaurant employers, employees and their families. IRA Members can save up to 5% off Health, Dental, Vision and other forms of Insurance.

Start realizing these opportunities by scanning the QR code or visiting [illinoisrestaurants.org/page/EndorsedPrograms](https://illinoisrestaurants.org/page/EndorsedPrograms)



# EDUCATION

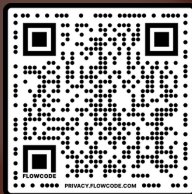
*We've got your  
certification needs  
covered.*

**The IRA is the best solution for all of your certification needs.** Be sure to comply with Illinois law by getting certified with the most experienced instructors. Illinois Restaurant Association members receive special pricing. You can trust the IRA to keep you informed and compliant:

- ServSafe Food Service Sanitation Manager
- ServSafe Food Handler
- ServSafe Alcohol / BASSET
- Summer Festival Food Vendor Sanitation
- ServSafe Allergen
- Sexual Harassment Prevention Training

In addition to year-round classes at our offices in both English and Spanish, we also offer private classes for groups of 10 or more at your location. Call our office at (312) 787-4000 to book your private class.

For a schedule of class dates or to register, visit [illinoisrestaurants.org](http://illinoisrestaurants.org).



Scan to Register





# FOUNDATION

*Build the Future of Hospitality*

## **The Illinois Restaurant Association Educational Foundation (IRAEF)**

Developing skilled talent, supporting workers, and connecting restaurant owners with job-ready employees.



## **We provide incredible value to restaurant owners and the hospitality industry:**

### **Developing Talent:**

- ProStart® Program: Prepares high school students with certifications, internships, and real-world experience.

### **Scholarships:**

- \$3.4M+ in Scholarships awarded to future culinary and hospitality professionals.

### **Workforce Development Programs:**

- Offers essential training for youth and justice-involved individuals to build successful careers in hospitality.

### **Supporting Workers:**

- \$290K+ in Emergency Relief provided to food and beverage workers in crisis.

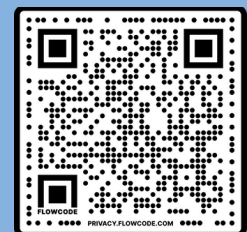
### **Meeting Workforce Needs:**

- Job placement programs connect trained, job-ready candidates with employers.

## **How to get involved:**

- **Donate:** Support scholarships, training programs, and emergency relief efforts.
- **Volunteer:** Mentor students, host internships, provide job-shadowing opportunities, or share your expertise.
- **Hire Graduates:** Tap into a pipeline of skilled, motivated, and trained employees.

**Together, we can build a stronger, more sustainable future for Illinois's hospitality industry.**



Scan to Get Involved



# WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

## IRA Educational Foundation ProStart®

Available in 52 Illinois high schools, Prostart® is a two-year, industry-backed culinary arts and restaurant management program aimed at providing valuable experience and empowering the next generation of hospitality professionals.

### Career Exploration

- Career Camps
- Career Fairs
- Field Trips
- Guest Speakers
- Job Shadow Days
- Mentoring

### Practical Experience

- Industry Certification
- Job Readiness Training
- Internship Placements

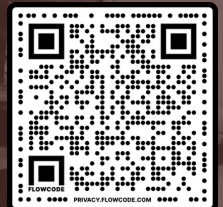
### Connections to Post-Secondary Education

- College Tours
- College Prep Workshops
- Scholarship Prep Workshops

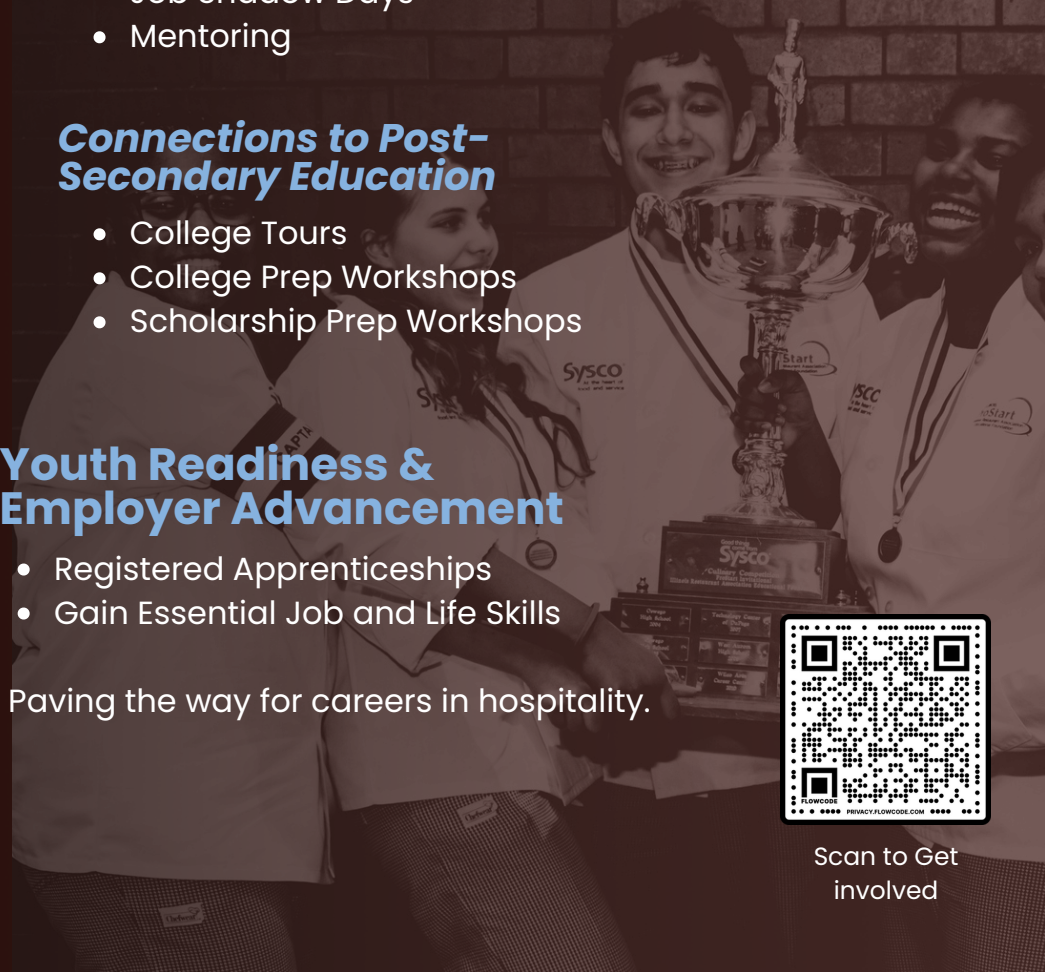
### Youth Readiness & Employer Advancement

- Registered Apprenticeships
- Gain Essential Job and Life Skills

Paving the way for careers in hospitality.



Scan to Get  
involved



# CHICAGO GOURMET

Presented by



Chicago Gourmet presents food connoisseurs with the best food, wine, spirits and beer from Chicago and beyond!



Scan to learn more about Chicago Gourmet

HIT A STAGGERING  
**2.03 BIL**  
MEDIA IMPRESSIONS



# EVENTS

## CHEF'S TABLE

Mix and mingle with over 700 industry peers while sampling food and cocktails from the top restaurants in Chicago and Chicagoland area.

## IRA GOLF CLASSIC

Build valuable relationships through a casual day on the course. The event unites over 300 restaurant and food service professionals, which is followed by a spirited evening reception.

## MEET THE EXPERTS

The most anticipated annual membership event. Top industry professionals participate in one-on-one speed coaching and power networking.

## ANNUAL MEETING

An annual celebration of the IRA membership that welcomes and installs new Officers and new members of our Board of Directors.

## MEMBERSHIP EVENTS

Discuss the latest industry news and trends with other members and learn from fellow peers. These events include: seminars, webinars, business advising, local roundtables, Tech Tour, and our Cubs Rooftop Membership Mixer.



There are several additional marketing and networking opportunities throughout the year. Check our website, [illinoisrestaurants.org](http://illinoisrestaurants.org) for more information.

# CORPORATE SPONSORS



Thank you to the 2025 Illinois Restaurant Association Corporate Sponsors

## DIAMOND



## PLATINUM



## GOLD



## SILVER



## BRONZE



Bringing people and  
businesses together.

**JOIN US.**



To effectively serve the needs of the restaurant industry and support its continued growth, the Illinois Restaurant Association is proud to be guided by its prominent and influential Board of Directors. Comprised of industry leaders and experts, our Board plays a vital role in shaping the future of the association and the restaurant community in Illinois.

## 2025 OFFICERS

**President & CEO**  
Sam Tola

**Chair**  
Scott Weiner  
The Fifty/50 Group

**First Vice Chair**  
Liz Lombardo Stark  
Gibsons Restaurant Group

**Second Vice Chair**  
Clodagh Lawless  
The Dearborn

**Corporate Secretary**  
Carmen Rossi  
8 | Hospitality

**Treasurer**  
Carin Stutz  
Hawaiian Bros.

**Assistant Treasurer**  
Deanna Chang  
Plante Moran

**Immediate Past Chairman**  
Steven Hartenstein  
Lucca Osteria & Bar

**IRA Educational Foundation Chair**  
Adam Barrons  
EcoLab

## 2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Aaron Aschemann**  
Gordon Food Service

**Joshua Bennett**  
Reyes Coca-Cola Bottling

**Kevin Boehm**  
Boka Restaurant Group

**Bill Carlson**  
Turano Baking Company

**D'Andre Carter**  
Soul & Smoke

**Karen Conn**  
Conn's Hospitality Group

**Dave Connor**  
Blackhawk Restaurant Group, LLC

**Jim Doney**  
Chicago Beverage Systems

**Michelle Durpetti**  
Gene & Georgetti

**Adam Gewanter**  
TAO Group

**Christina Gonzalez**  
Taqueria Los Comales

**Andrea Hill**  
HMC Hospitality Group

**Billy Lawless Jr.**  
Gage Hospitality Group

**Brad Maher**  
HMS Host

**Tim McGrail**  
PepsiCo

**Matt Menna**  
Sterling Bay / Four Corners

**Mario Ponce**  
Takito Brands

**Tony Priolo**  
Piccolo Sogno

**Dan Raskin**  
Manny's Cafeteria & Delicatessen

**Ethan Samson**  
Lettuce Entertain You Enterprises

**Korina Sanchez**  
Third Coast Hospitality

**Faraz Sardharia**  
Tandoor Char House

**Mike Telesky**  
UnitedHealthcare

**Mike Thompson**  
Southern Glazer's Wine and Spirits

**Kim Walz**  
McDonald's

**Patrick Wartan**  
Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP

**Eric Williams**  
Bronzeville Winery



**ILLINOIS**  
RESTAURANT  
ASSOCIATION

# MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

OPERATOR MEMBER • ILLINOIS RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION

Organization Name \_\_\_\_\_

Corporate Name (If Different Than Above) \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Contact \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Email (confidential) \_\_\_\_\_

Website \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Locations \_\_\_\_\_ Attach list of additional locations, if any.

Company Type:  Independent Restaurant  Franchisee  National/Regional Chain

Industry Segment:  Fine Dining  Casual/Family Dining  Fast Casual  Quick Service  Other \_\_\_\_\_

Do You Have A Liquor License?  Yes  No

Number of Full Time Employees \_\_\_\_\_

Cuisine Type \_\_\_\_\_

## PAYMENT

Check payable to Illinois Restaurant Association,  
enclosed for \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Credit Card, charged for \$ \_\_\_\_\_

## CREDIT CARD INFORMATION

Name On Card \_\_\_\_\_

Billing Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Card Number \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_ CSV \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Memberships are non-transferable and non-refundable. By becoming a member and paying your dues, you agree to the bylaws of the IRA. This firm or individual certifies that the information provided is correct and agrees to the statements on this application.

### ANNUAL GROSS-SALES

### DUES

\$0 - \$499,999 .....	<b>\$299</b>
\$500,000 - \$999,999.....	<b>\$465</b>
\$1,000,000 - \$2,499,999 .....	<b>\$695</b>
\$2,500,000 - \$4,999,999 .....	<b>\$1,165</b>
\$5,000,000 - \$9,999,999 .....	<b>\$1,745</b>
\$10,000,000 - \$10,999,999.....	<b>\$2,030</b>

Add \$250 for each \$1 million starting at \$10 million in Annual Gross Sales with a maximum dues amount of \$5,000. Monthly/Recurring payments are available for credit cards only. Contact IRA Office at (800) 572-1086 or membership@illinoisrestaurants.org.

### OPTIONAL

#### Political Action Committee

\$50, \$100, Other..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

#### Educational Foundation

\$25, \$50, Other..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL INVESTMENT** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Disclosure Notice: 61% of your dues may be tax deductible as ordinary and necessary business expenses. 39% are non-deductible lobbying and political expenditures.

Return completed application to the Illinois Restaurant Association  
33 West Monroe, Suite 250 | Chicago, Illinois 60603  
(312) 787-4000 | Fax: (312) 787-4792 | membership@illinoisrestaurants.org

ILLINOIS



RESTAURANT  
ASSOCIATION

Illinois Restaurant Association  
33 W. Monroe St, Ste. 250  
Chicago, IL 60603  
Ph: 312-787-4000 • Fax: 312-787-4792  
[info@illinoisrestaurants.org](mailto:info@illinoisrestaurants.org)