

## Featured Speaker – Chef Roshara Sanders



Chef Roshara Sanders, is the daughter of Sharon Sanders, a Bridgeport, Connecticut Habitat CFC homeowner. Chef Sanders, grew up in a Habitat home. She was recently named one of the 2024 Food & Wine Game Changers. She has built a remarkable 15+ year career in the culinary industry, earning accolades that highlight her unmatched fire and passion for food and culinary arts. Chef Sanders currently serves as a professor at The Culinary Institute of America, where she made history in 2020 as the first African American woman to join the faculty in Culinary Arts.

Chef Sanders' culinary journey is rooted in resilience and determination. Before her teaching career, she honed her skills at the prestigious one-star Oceana Restaurant in Midtown Manhattan. Her story, however, begins in the U.S. Army, where she served with distinction as an Automated Logistical Specialist in the 4th Engineer Battalion, deploying to Iraq and Afghanistan. Upon returning stateside, she joined the 395th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, cross-training as a food supply specialist—a pivotal step toward her culinary career.

Reflecting on her path, Chef Sanders credits the GI Bill for enabling her to attend The Culinary Institute of America. She says, *"I was passionate about cooking. If it weren't for the GI Bill, I wouldn't have gone to the Culinary Institute of America or any college for that matter. It was a blessing, and it made my dream a reality."*

Chef Sanders' dedication has earned her numerous accolades, including Campaign Medals from Iraq and Afghanistan, a Navy/Marine Achievement Medal, and recognition as Chef of the Month in December 2014 by Chef Works, an international foodservice uniform company. In 2015, she showcased her culinary prowess on the Food Network's hit show "Chopped" in a special Veterans Day episode featuring military chefs from every branch. Competing against chefs with twice her age and experience, Chef Sanders emerged victorious. Her success and talent have been widely recognized, including her induction into Rémy Martin's Circle of Centaurs Mentorship Program and her inclusion in NBC Black's 2016 "28 Under 28" list, alongside other inspiring African Americans like Cam Newton. In 2018, Chef Sanders earned a coveted Forbes Fellow designation at the Forbes 30 Under 30 Summit in Boston. That same year, she presented a feature dinner at the renowned James Beard House in honor of Veterans Day. Through her achievements and advocacy, Chef Roshara Sanders continues to inspire the next generation of culinary professionals and community leaders, breaking barriers and proving that passion and determination can lead to extraordinary success.