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**Saratoga Performing Arts Center Announces
CulinaryArts@SPAC Fall & Winter Series**

Featuring

Project Griddle: The Versatile Art of Grilling on a Flattop

with Steven Raichlen, October 7

Chop Chop: Cooking the Foods of Nigeria

with Ozoz Sokoh, November 15

Potluck Desserts: Joyful Recipes to Share with Pride

with Justin Burke, December 4

Culinary tastings, drinks, and conversation with authors, chefs

and “WAMC On The Road” hosts Joe Donahue and Sarah LaDuke

Saratoga Springs, NY (August 21, 2025) – Saratoga Performing Arts Center announces that its innovative ***CulinaryArts@SPAC*** initiative will return this fall and winter with three flavorful and inclusive events, presented in partnership with lead sponsor [Franklin Square Market](#) at The Pines at SPAC. The series kicks off on October 7 with barbecue legend and bestselling author **Steven Raichlen**, and his new book ***Project Griddle: The Versatile Art of Grilling on a Flattop***, followed by a celebration of West African culture with **Ozoz**

Sokoh's Chop Chop: Cooking the Foods of Nigeria on November 15, and concluding with **Potluck Desserts to Share with Pride** hosted by baker and LGBTQ+ advocate **Justin Burke** on December 4. Each evening will feature exclusive tastings, conversation with WAMC hosts as part of its **"WAMC On The Road"** series, and opportunities for book signings. The conversations will be recorded for future broadcast on WAMC's *The Roundtable*.

This season also marks the debut of SPAC's new Culinary Consultant, celebrated local chef **Kevin London**. Known for his dedication to sustainable sourcing and inventive seasonal menus, London will work closely with SPAC to shape the culinary vision of the series, fostering connections among visiting chefs, local purveyors, and the community.

"We are thrilled to welcome such a diverse group of culinary voices to SPAC this season, along with the creative expertise of Chef Kevin London," says **Elizabeth Sobol, Chief Executive Officer of Saratoga Performing Arts Center**. "From the fiery creativity of Steven Raichlen's griddle, to the soulful flavors of Nigeria with Ozoz Sokoh, to Justin Burke's joyful celebration of Pride through shared desserts, these events are about more than great food — they're about connection, conversation, and community."

Beyond its amphitheater stage, SPAC has become a year-round gathering place celebrating the artistry of food in building connection while empowering individuals to understand how what we eat influences our communities and our planet. The CulinaryArts@SPAC initiative, founded in 2020, combines culinary excellence and education with exquisite meals that emphasize socially conscious cultivation and consumption, local procurement, and fair wages.

Project Griddle with Steven Raichlen **October 7, 2025**

6 p.m. – 9 p.m.

Barbecue legend, James Beard Award-winning author, and host of PBS's *Project Fire*, Steven Raichlen kicks off the CulinaryArts@SPAC fall season with a sizzling celebration of the griddle. In conversation with WAMC host Joe Donahue, Raichlen will share the inspiration behind his newest book, *Project Griddle*—an essential guide to griddles, planchas, and flat-tops packed with practical cooking techniques, chef's shortcuts, and nearly 80 irresistible recipes.

Prized for their accessibility, versatility, and sheer fun, griddles are having a moment—and Raichlen traces their history from the teppan of Japan to the plancha of Spain to champa grilling in South America. Guests will enjoy tastings from *Project Griddle* including Tapas Bar Shrimp, Griddled Figs and Halloumi Cheese, Bacon-Seared Dates, Vietnamese Pork

Meatballs and Manchego Crisps with Greens—alongside wine, beer, and non-alcoholic beverages. A book signing will follow. Tickets to attend are \$125 and are available at spac.org.

Chop Chop: Cooking the Foods of Nigeria with Ozoz Sokoh

November 15, 2025

6 p.m. – 9 p.m.

CulinaryArts@SPAC presents an immersive evening of West African culture with Nigerian-born culinary anthropologist and author Ozoz Sokoh, in conversation with WAMC's Sarah LaDuke. Sokoh will share stories from her highly praised new book *Chop Chop: Cooking the Foods of Nigeria*, a definitive guide to Nigerian cuisine featuring 100 recipes that honor and preserve the nation's rich culinary traditions. In the tradition of Julia Child's *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* and Madhur Jaffrey's *An Invitation to Indian Cooking*, *Chop Chop* offers both a cultural history and a hands-on introduction to the flavors of Nigeria.

The evening's tasting menu will be prepared by Albany's Keobi Restaurant, known for its authentic and vibrant Nigerian dishes, and will feature dishes like Chin Chin and Puff Puff, Jollof Rice, Nigerian Salad, Egusi Soup, Fried Chicken and Mingau de Tapioca. Guests can also enjoy Afro-beat music and explore a marketplace presented by Nine Steps Away from Africa, offering handcrafted silver and beaded jewelry, balafons, soaps, musical instruments, and more. Nigerian cocktails and mocktails, wine, beer, and non-alcoholic beverages will be served. A book signing will follow. Tickets to attend are \$125 and are available at spac.org.

The following Sunday, November 16, Ozoz Sokoh will be teaching a small group cooking class at Franklin Square Market, SPAC's lead sponsor for the CulinaryArts. For more information, click [here](#).

Potluck Desserts to Share with Pride with Justin Burke

December 4, 2025

6 p.m. – 9 p.m.

Indulge in dessert for dinner with an inclusive, joy-filled dessert potluck hosted by baker, LGBTQ+ activist, and TV personality Justin Burke, in conversation with WAMC's Sarah LaDuke. The region's hottest pastry chefs including Michele Hunter of Familiar Creature, Sam Pierre of Standard Fare, and Vanessa Traver of The Reading Room will offer sweet

creations such as icebox cakes, layered desserts, self-saucing puddings and slab pies from Burke's new cookbook *Potluck Desserts*.

In *Potluck Desserts*, Burke offers simple, nostalgic recipes infused with personal stories from his life in both the world of baking and the queer community. Inspired by his first queer potluck—a gathering that sparked his passion for food and its power to unite—Burke shares playful yet stylish treats such as Lemon-Thyme Bars, Hummingbird Blondies, Snickerdoodle Peach Cobbler, and Cranberry-Orange Fluff Salad. Throughout, Burke reflects on the social importance of potlucks, particularly in queer spaces, and celebrates the joy of serving beloved dishes to friends, families, and chosen families alike.

Champagne and a specialty cocktail will be curated by Saratoga Springs' Bocage and Standard Fare. Wine, beer, and non-alcoholic beverages will also be available. A book signing will follow. Tickets are \$95 and are available at spac.org.

CulinaryArts@SPAC is presented in partnership with lead sponsor [Franklin Square Market](#), downtown Saratoga's community market and bar. The initiative is produced by Culinary Consultants Pam Abrams and Kevin London.

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Saratoga Performing Arts Center

Saratoga Performing Arts Center (SPAC), located in the historic resort town of Saratoga Springs in upstate New York, is one of America's most prestigious outdoor amphitheaters. Its tranquil setting in a 2,400-acre park preserve surrounded by hiking trails, geysers, and natural mineral springs draws lovers of arts, culture and nature for performances by resident companies New York City Ballet, The Philadelphia Orchestra, The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the Saratoga Jazz Festival, and concerts by Live Nation. SPAC also hosts imaginative programming such as Caffè Lena @ SPAC and initiatives in culinary, literary, healing and visual arts.

SPAC is a 501c3 charitable organization. Donations and proceeds from fundraising events benefit the Center's thriving education program, community outreach efforts, and the vibrancy of its programming. For more information visit spac.org.



Raichlen



Ozoz Sokoh



Steven

Justin Burke