

HEALTHY CHEF CHALLENGE 2024



RAFAT ALZEIN

EXECUTIVE CHEF
UNIVERSITY CLUB OF CHICAGO

Rafat Alzein is Executive Chef of the University Club of Chicago. Chef Alzein first joined University Club as Executive Sous Chef in 2003 and has been serving as Executive Chef since 2021.

He played a key role in the transformation of the Club's food and beverage program, hosting legendary wine dinners in Cathedral Hall, while also bringing casual favorites to the Living Room and comforting classics in College Hall. His passion for culinary innovation is on full display in Parliament, where he and his team of more than 50 staff members create memorable meals by bringing together seasonal delights and Club favorites. He also played a central role in expanding the Club's Annual New Year's Day Open House, growing it from 800 members and guests in 2003 to more than 2,500 in 2023.

He was named Acting Executive Chef in October of 2020 during a pivotal time when the Club was looking for fresh ways to adjust changing member needs during the pandemic. He and his team quickly developed a successful takeout program, including the hugely popular Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's to-go dinner offerings.

Chef Alzein takes a contemporary approach to cooking, emphasizing seasonal ingredients, refined technique, and authentic flavor. He is constantly inspired by the Club's motivated food and beverage team and enjoys taking on new challenges, including crafting menus and executing special member events. Chef Alzein says, "Creating memorable experiences around exceptional cuisine is one of the most rewarding parts of my job. I love the power food has to bring people together." As a resident of Chicago for more than 30 years, he's watched the culinary scene shift and evolve. To him, the best restaurants are places centered around quality, creativity and consistency.

Prior to joining the University Club of Chicago, Chef Alzein was the Executive Sous Chef at The Four Seasons Hotel Chicago for six years. He is a graduate of Kendall College's culinary program with a degree in Culinary Arts. He developed his love of cooking when he started working at his family's restaurant at an early age.

Chef Alzein lives in Logan Square, where he feels fortunate to have so many remarkable restaurants nearby, including Lula Cafe and Daisies, which are two of his favorites. His son Walid, graduated from Augustana College with a B.S. in Neuroscience and Biology with support from a University Club Foundation scholarship, and has been accepted into the Physician's Assistant program at Western Michigan University.