

## Chris Kennedy Aken

### WINERY CHEF

A native of Southern California, Chris Kennedy is a long-time chef and restaurateur who has found a home as winery chef at Trefethen Family Vineyards. With more than two decades of cooking and innovating in the diverse Napa Valley, Chicago, and San Francisco dining scenes, Kennedy brings a wealth of knowledge, creativity and a lifelong passion for hospitality. As the winery chef, Kennedy combines locavore sensibilities with a knack for curating unique experiences in the winery's exciting new culinary programs.

Fueled by a deeply rooted desire to create transparent and transcendent cuisine, Kennedy's career began in Oklahoma City in 1995, where his culinary mentor Chef Kurt Fleischfresser taught him the intricate and detailed fundamentals of classic French cuisine. In 1998, Kennedy moved to San Francisco where he held the title Chef Tournat at La Folie for two years before moving to the Windy City in 2000 – a decision he describes as eye-opening. Kennedy served as a sous chef at Red Light, a pan-Asian restaurant, and as executive sous chef at Rhapsody, a high-end restaurant in the famed Chicago Symphony Center. During his time in Chicago, Kennedy made careful observations of innovative chefs who dedicated their careers to “pushing the envelope,” personally inspiring Kennedy to do the same.

In 2002, Kennedy relocated to Napa Valley, a place he has since proudly called home. He started as the chef de cuisine at Catahoula Restaurant & Saloon, but quickly transitioned to serving as the executive chef and partner at Stomp Restaurant, handling all ownership responsibilities.

Kennedy realized a lifelong dream in 2007 when he opened a boutique catering company, Toast Catering, with his wife, Kathleen. During this time, he was introduced to and began working closely with Janet Trefethen. In addition to cooking for various events at the Trefethen estate, Chris helped develop suggested recipes for pairing with the family's wines. In 2009, he became the executive chef and beverage director at AVIA Hotel in Napa and in 2016, he joined the Culinary Institute of America as the opening chef de cuisine for the Restaurant at Copia.

Ten years after he began working with the Trefethen family, Kennedy was hired in 2017 as the full-time winery chef. Kennedy has a deep appreciation for the Trefethen story and their wines. He brings a lifelong obsession for developing truly memorable culinary experiences and intends to celebrate the natural deliciousness of what is grown on the estate—in the vineyards and in the gardens. Chef Chris Kennedy expressed, “I’m inspired by the family’s passion for authenticity and it comes through in every glass and every bottle. You can truly taste the estate. This passion is infectious and aligned with my own values. With the family’s vision in mind, I strive to curate the perfect pairing with every varietal and every vintage.”

