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Brandon Near will oversee the daily culinary operations as the new senior chef de cuisine for the Water's Table, Sip Lounge, Dock & Drink, and the Market at the Hyatt Regency Lake Washington at Seattle's Southport. He will also manage the culinary programming for special events and will partner with Pastry Sous Chef Amy Tung to develop desserts for future menus. With an educational background from the Renton Technical College culinary arts program in Renton, Near brings with him over 20 years of culinary experience.



Ronald Moore is the latest addition to the culinary team at the Yakima Convention & Event Center in Yakima, Washington. As the new executive chef, Moore brings a rich gastronomic background as a current member of the American Culinary Federation and as the former executive chef at the Legends Casino in Toppenish and the Toyota Center in Kennewick. He is also the former owner and executive chef of Asian fusion restaurant, Mangoz Grill, in Yakima.



William F. Whitney is the new executive chef at the Icicle Village Resort in Leavenworth, Washington. His role oversees the entire culinary vision for the resort, which includes the JJ Hills Fresh Grill restaurant and the food services that cater for the event spaces. Starting his career in food and catering services at Honolulu's Marine Corps Base Hawaii, his home state, he eventually dabbled in other roles at popular restaurants across Oahu and beyond. He brings over 17 years of professional experience to the Icicle Village team.



THE PERKS OF COLUMBIA HOSPITALITY

Workplace-culture website Comparably recognized Seattle's Columbia Hospitality for its perks and benefits. The employees of the hospitality management company provided the votes for the "Best Perks and Benefits" honor, bestowed last October. It was the only hospitality management company represented out of 100 winners.

Columbia Hospitality manages and oversees myriad properties, from hotels to conference centers to golf courses—many located in its home state of Washington, but also some in Oregon, California, and Wisconsin.

Hugo Moreno, the company's vice president of people and culture, explains that they use Comparably to obtain and understand data about team member engagement, compensation, benefits, and other metrics to mark where Columbia Hospitality compares to other companies in and outside of the hospitality industry.

"We want to be the type of company that [takes] care of our team members so they can take care of our guests," he says. Comparably recognizes the benefits for team members like paid time off, health and dental insurance, holiday pay, and competitive compensation, alongside other elements like hotel and rental car discounts. Moreno also notes the company invested in mental health support, partnering with Talkspace, an online therapy company, to offer team members enrolled in the benefits program's mental health care.

■ columbiahospitality.com

Microsoft Ignites in Seattle

» LAST OCTOBER, MICROSOFT welcomed over 3,500 attendees to the Seattle Convention Center's Arch building for the company's first in-person flagship event since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The annual conference, Microsoft Ignite, brings together the world's top internet technology professionals and developers for live forums, demonstrations, and networking opportunities.

"The Seattle Convention Center rose to the occasion and was filled with energy, reimagined space usage, and celebration," says Kelly Saling, senior vice president and chief sales officer of Visit Seattle, in a prepared statement.

Beyond the convention center, over 300,000 people registered to join Microsoft Ignite's remote digital component, along with thousands participating at five additional in-person events around the world. **m+e**

■ microsoft.com ■ seattleconventioncenter.com ■ visitseattle.org