Hayley Matson-Mathes



Hayley moved to Hawaii 25 years ago. Born and raised in Washington County, Kansas, she landed in the 50th state, where a diverse cultural environment awaited her and where food is ingrained in daily life. A fourth-generation Kansan raised on her family's farm and ranch, Hayley's passion for food and community was sparked early. At just nine years old, she announced her culinary dream to a local Extension Club — a dream that would carry her from wheat fields to the Culinary Institute of America and professional culinary exchanges in France and Italy.

For more than 20 years, Hayley has served as Executive Director of the Hawaii Culinary Education Foundation (HCEF), a nonprofit organization that empowers the next generation of chefs through immersive, hands-on programs. Since its founding, HCEF has presented hundreds of programs to over 83,700 culinary students across Hawaii's community colleges and high schools, offering transformative experiences led by top chefs from Hawaii and the mainland. Culinary professionals and community members also attend programs to interact with these visiting culinary masters.

Her career spans roles in food education, agricultural marketing, and corporate communications. In Kansas, she worked with the Cooperative Extension Service, the Department of Agriculture, and Farmland Foods, where she developed recipes, managed consumer outreach, and created international food promotions. Throughout her career, Hayley appeared weekly on media outlets. She served on the American Heart Association's retail advisory panel.

An active leader in the culinary community, Hayley has held leadership positions with Les Dames d'Escoffier International (LDEI), including serving as International President in 2018. She is a committed supporter of the Brock Circle. She has also served as Marketing Communications Chair for the International Association of Culinary Professionals (IACP).

Like LDEI's mission to inspire, advance, and support women in food, beverage, and hospitality, Hayley's goal is to empower students to one day become the instructors who ignite change in the next generation. Her greatest joy is seeing former students return as accomplished chefs, eager to mentor the next generation—bringing her work full circle.