FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Salem 400+ Honors Founder Roger Conant with Transatlantic Celebrations and Sister City Bond

Celebrity chef and descendant Scott Conant headlines Food at 400+ as Salem, MA and East Budleigh, UK formalize historic ties

February 13, 2026 — SALEM, Mass. — As the United States marks its 250th anniversary in 2026, Salem, Massachusetts, is celebrating a much earlier milestone. Four hundred years ago, Roger Conant founded a settlement that predates the nation itself. Throughout the quadricentennial year, the City of Salem is commemorating that legacy with Salem 400+ (www.salem400.org), honoring Roger Conant's enduring impact as a tradesman, peacemaker, and community builder.

This spring, Conant's legacy will be celebrated on both sides of the Atlantic, with events in Salem, Massachusetts, and in his birthplace of East Budleigh, England, including the formal establishment of a Sister City relationship (Twinning in the UK and Europe) between the two communities.

A centerpiece of Salem's celebration will be a special appearance by Scott Conant, a 13th-generation descendant of the Conant family and a James Beard Award-winning chef. He is known for his soulful approach to Italian cuisine and hospitality, as well as his longtime role as a judge on Food Network's Chopped. Conant has been invited to Salem and will be honored with a City Seal and will headline programming during Food at 400+ (www.foodat400.com) with a featured appearance at Salem State University's Sophia Gordon Center for Creative and Performing Arts.

"Salem isn't just a city I'm visiting — it's where my family's American story began," said Scott Conant. "Taking part in this 400th anniversary, in the place Roger Conant first established, is deeply personal. I'm honored to share that connection through food."

Conant recently gained a greater understanding of his ancestor's role in early American history.

"My connection to Salem through Roger Conant is a source of profound pride," he said. "Only recently have I come to fully appreciate the integral role he played in shaping New England's early economy and the foundation of colonial life."

Born in East Budleigh, England, in 1592, Roger Conant came to the New World seeking opportunity and stability. Appointed governor of the Cape Ann settlement, Conant faced an escalating dispute with Plymouth military officer Myles Standish over fishing stages — a confrontation that threatened violence. Through diplomacy and restraint, Conant brokered a peaceful resolution, earning a reputation as a man of peace. His collaborative approach also fostered respectful relationships with Indigenous communities. Roger Conant's role in salted cod preservation helped open the colony to international trade.

In 1626, seeking better farmland and continued access to New England's rich fisheries, Conant relocated the settlement to Naumkeag, now Salem. His leadership ensured the colony prospered without internal conflict, laying the groundwork for Salem's future as a center of trade and commerce.

East Budleigh will honor its notable native son with its first Peacemaker Festival, scheduled for May 15–17, 2026, commemorating the 400th anniversary of Conant's founding of Salem. The

Bishop of Exeter will address the Peacemaker Festival and there will be a Celebration of Village Music, both of which will be recorded to share with Salem in June.

“There has been tremendous interest within the East Budleigh community in celebrating Roger Conant’s achievements,” said John Tresidder, Chair of the East Budleigh Parish Council. “We are delighted to support this historic anniversary and to recognize the enduring connection between East Budleigh and Salem through our twinning.”

In Salem, Mayor Dominick Pangallo has filed a resolution with the City Council to formally establish East Budleigh as a Sister City (Twinning) strengthening a relationship rooted in shared history. That connection will be celebrated during Food at 400+ in June, with participation from representatives of East Budleigh and the British Consulate-General in Boston.

“Salem 400+ honors not only our complex history, but also the values of peace, courage, and cooperation that continue to shape our city,” said Mayor Pangallo. “Roger Conant is central to Salem’s story, and we are proud to celebrate that legacy alongside our friends in East Budleigh. We are thrilled to commemorate our milestone anniversary by formalizing this relationship, and we look forward to the next 400 years of friendship between our communities.”

ABOUT SCOTT CONANT

Scott Conant is a two-time James Beard Award-winning chef, cookbook author, and TV personality. With a career spanning over 40 years, Conant brings a deft touch and unwavering passion to creating culinary experiences with thoughtful hospitality and soulful cuisine. His portfolio of acclaimed restaurants includes Leola in the Bahamas, The Americano in Atlanta (GA), Cellaio in Monticello (NY), and The Kitchen, an SC Spot in Newbury (NY.) Conant is the founder of premier Italian sauce brand, Martone Street, and has published four cookbooks to date with the most recent one in 2021, Peace, Love, and Pasta.

ABOUT SALEM 400+

Salem 400+ is the City of Salem’s official commemoration of its 400th anniversary, marking four centuries since Roger Conant established the settlement at Naumkeag in 1626. Programming throughout 2026 celebrates Salem’s history, diverse community, and vision for the future.

ABOUT FOOD AT 400+

- A family-friendly festival running June 11–22, 2026, https://www.Foodat400.com
- The multi-experience event, presented and produced by Salem Food Tours, features both free public programming and a ticketed event, as well as a film and restaurant event.

ABOUT SALEM FOOD TOURS

Salem Food Tours has showcased Salem’s culinary culture since 2012, connecting locals and visitors with the stories, people, and flavors that define the city’s food scene. Through walking tours, special events, and community partnerships, Salem Food Tours explores the intersection of food, history, and community.

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