

TALKING WITH: ACCLAIMED CHEF JACQUES PÉPIN

# Hartford

**Readers'  
Top Choices**

On Shopping, Restaurants,  
Services & More

**The  
Best...**





By **CAROL RIORDAN**

Photographs by **PATRICK RAYCRAFT & LAUREN SCHNEIDERMAN**

*When only the best will do, follow our readers' recommendations, on everything from pizza to swimming pools.*

### **Michael Giannamore**

OWNER,  
AQUA POOL AND PATIO

"If you can draw it, we can build it," says Michael Giannamore of his company's custom pools. Guiding customers through the design process is key. "A pool can be an oasis of privacy or a place for family to gather." In business since 1970, the company has been trusted for generations. Giannamore says that building a pool is about increasing quality of life. "It allows people to sit and chill — to enjoy their free moments."

### **Scot Haney**

METEOROLOGIST AND  
'BETTER CONNECTICUT'  
CO-HOST,  
WFSB 3 CONNECTICUT

"Many people watch local news to get the weather," says Scot Haney. "I like delivering information that people really need." Haney is devoted to his viewers and to charitable causes. "I'm emcee for the Keane Foundation golf tournament on May 22." People count on starting the day with Haney's buoyant presence and sense of humor. "I'm there to make people happy. That's as much my role as the forecasting."

### **Annie Quagliaroli**

FOUNDER/CO-OWNER,  
THE YOGA SHOP

I firmly believe that yoga is exercise," says Annie Quagliaroli. Her LivFree Power Yoga incorporates cardio as well as stretching, balance and stability. Studios are heated to 90 degrees. "It makes people more pliable physically and mentally." Practitioners feel more focused and less stressed. The mood is exceptionally supportive. "People are hugging each other and looking each other in the eye. The human connection is huge."

### **Dante Paul Cistulli**

PARTNER,  
MAX RESTAURANT GROUP;  
OWNER, SAVOY PIZZERIA  
& CRAFT BAR

Homemade mozzarella is a staple at Savoy. "We locally source the curds and make it fresh every day." The menu is seasonal and creative, cooked in wood-fired ovens from Italy. Craft cocktails are constantly changing. "The bar program will send you to the moon!" Large windows make Savoy an ideal lunch spot, and the atmosphere is a big draw. "It's old-school Brooklyn with modern polish."

readers.

- 1st RUNNER-UP  
**Avon Clock & Lighting**  
2nd RUNNER-UP  
**Home Depot**

## LOCAL FOOD MARKET

**Highland Park Market**  
Last year's runner-up moves to the stop spot, with five family-owned locations dedicated to offering a pleasant shopping experience, outstanding products and excellent service.

- 1st RUNNER-UP  
**Hall's Kitchen, West Hartford**  
2nd RUNNER-UP  
**Avon Prime Meats**

## LOCAL PET BOUTIQUE

**Naturally Dogs & Cats, Hartford**  
Getting its start from Hartford's iConnect project, Naturally Dogs & Cats won readers' hearts for its accessibility to downtown residents and one-on-one service.

- 1st RUNNER-UP  
**Dirty Dog Do it Yourself Pet Wash & Pawstry Shop, Berlin**  
2nd RUNNER-UP - TIE  
**Dogology, Canton;**  
**Leaps & Bones, South Windsor**

## MALL OR SHOPPING CENTER

**Westfarms**  
Westfarms repeats as top mall in central Connecticut, with more than 160 retailers and restaurants, about 40 of them not found elsewhere in northern Connecticut or southwestern Massachusetts.

- 1st RUNNER-UP  
**The Promenade Shops at Evergreen Walk, South Windsor**  
2nd RUNNER-UP  
**The Shoppes at Buckland Hills, Manchester**

## MEN'S CLOTHING

**Morneault's Stackpole Moore Tryon, Hartford**  
A repeat winner, this historic, independent, downtown Hartford retailer suits readers to a T, whether they're looking for classic executive attire or more fashion-forward styles.

- 1st RUNNER-UP  
**Nordstrom**  
2nd RUNNER-UP  
**Uptown Consignment**

## PET STORE

**Petco**  
Last year's runner-up is this year's winner, as Petco garners praise for the wide variety of pet products and services available at its stores.

- 1st RUNNER-UP  
**Pet Supplies Plus**  
2nd RUNNER-UP  
**PetSmart**

## PLACE TO BUY A CAR

**CarMax Auto Superstore, Hartford**

CarMax Auto Superstore in Hartford is our readers' favorite place to buy a car, and it just might be their favorite place to sell a car, too.

- 1st RUNNER-UP  
**New Country Motor Cars, Mercedes-Benz, Hartford**  
2nd RUNNER-UP  
**Manchester Honda**

## POOLS OR HOT TUBS

**Aqua Pool & Patio, East Windsor**

Our readers reaffirm that this second-generation, family-owned company's proven experience in designing and building pools and spas makes the biggest splash in this category.

- 1st RUNNER-UP  
**Rizzo Pools, Newington**  
2nd RUNNER-UP  
**Juliano's Pools, Vernon**

## RUGS

**Kaoud Rugs**

In business for more than a half-century, this repeat winner with multiple locations carries rugs in all sizes and prices, offering a "lifetime trade-in" guarantee.

- 1st RUNNER-UP  
**HomeGoods**  
2nd RUNNER-UP: TIE  
**Action Carpet & Floor Covering;**  
**J. Namnoun Oriental Rug Gallery, Hartford**

## SHOES

**DSW**

Our readers vote with their feet, again choosing Designer Shoe Warehouse, with multiple stores in Connecticut offering outstanding selection and prices, for best shoes.

- 1st RUNNER-UP  
**FootPrints Shoes & Accessories, Newington**

- 2nd RUNNER-UP  
**Nordstrom**

## SPORTING GOODS

**Dick's Sporting Goods**

Started in 1948 by a teenager in Binghamton, N.Y., this top sporting goods retailer and repeat winner boasts more than 600 stores, including a dozen in Connecticut.

- 1st RUNNER-UP  
**REI**  
2nd RUNNER-UP  
**Cabela's, East Hartford**

## TOY STORE

**Toy Chest, West Hartford**

This family-owned and -operated store continues to be our readers' favorite for toys, stuffed animals, books, arts and crafts, kid-friendly furniture and more.

- 1st RUNNER-UP  
**Toys "R" Us**  
2nd RUNNER-UP  
**Necker's Toyland, Simsbury**

## TUXEDO RENTAL

**JT Ghamo, Hartford**

JT Ghamo, last year's runner-up, is this year's winner as the place where readers head when in need of men's formal attire.

- 1st RUNNER-UP  
**Formals by Antonio, Rocky Hill**  
2nd RUNNER-UP  
**Men's Wearhouse**

## WINE STORE

**West Side Wines & Spirits, West Hartford**

Rising to the top of the wine barrel is West Side Wines & Spirits of West Hartford, readers' choice for best Hartford-area wine store.

- 1st RUNNER-UP  
**Total Wine & More**  
2nd RUNNER-UP  
**Maximum Beverage**

## WOMEN'S CLOTHING

**BK & Co., West Hartford**

Fashion-conscious readers praise this delightful women's boutique founded by lifelong best friends and renowned for its refined sense of quality and attentive customer service.

- 1st RUNNER-UP  
**Soft Surroundings, South Windsor**  
2nd RUNNER-UP  
**Nordstrom**