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**JAMES
BEARD
FOUNDATION**

The James Beard Foundation Names 2012 Leadership Award Recipients

*Five Honorees Recognized for Work in Creating a More Healthful,
Sustainable, and Safe Food World During Third Annual Food Conference*

New York, NY (July 16, 2012) – Recognizing visionaries across a broad range of backgrounds including government, non-profit, and literary arts, the [James Beard Foundation](#) today announced the recipients of the second annual [James Beard Foundation Leadership Awards](#). This year's honorees are: **Wendell Berry**, **Jason Clay**, **Kathleen Merrigan**, **Tensie Whelan**, and **Malik Yakini**.

“This year’s James Beard Foundation’s annual Food Conference will shed light on the timely and important issue of trust as it relates to our food system, nutritional safety, and public health. Our second annual Leadership Awards highlight this country’s most effective change agents in our culinary world,” said Susan Ungaro, president of the James Beard Foundation. “These trailblazers are all working to create a more sustainable future and it is through their monumental achievements that we are able to continue a critical conversation about the future of food.”

Now in its second year, the Leadership Awards recognize specific outstanding initiatives as well as bodies of work and lifetime achievement. Excellence of work, innovation in approach, and scale of impact either within a community or across the nation were among the criteria used to select this year’s honorees.

2012 James Beard Foundation Leadership Award Recipients

Wendell Berry, Author, *Bringing it to the Table*:

For the brilliant insight he has brought to America's agrarian movement for more than six decades.

Dr. Jason Clay, Senior Vice President Market Transformation, World Wildlife Fund (WWF):

For his efforts to study and address the global social, environmental, and economic impact of a variety of commodities, and his cross-sector work to improve the sustainability and supply chain management of these commodities.

Dr. Kathleen Merrigan, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA):

For her efforts to strengthen the critical connection between farmers and consumers, create new opportunities for farmers and ranchers, support regional food infrastructure and bring agriculture into our daily conversations through efforts such as USDA's Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food initiative.

Tensie Whelan, President, Rainforest Alliance, and Co-Chair, Sustainable Food Lab Advisory Board:

For overseeing the transformation of the Rainforest Alliance into a respected international organization that works to transform land-use practices, business practices, and consumer behavior to conserve biodiversity and ensure sustainable livelihoods.

Malik Yakini, Executive Director, The Detroit Black Community Food Security Network (DBCFSN):

For his work to ensure social justice, food equity, and food security to the people of urban Detroit.

Honorees were chosen by an advisory board comprised of a dozen experts from diverse areas of expertise, as well as last year's Leadership Award recipients. The advisory board members are: Dan Barber, Rick Bayless, Scott Cullen, Hal Hamilton, Jessica Harris, Bob Lawrence, Marion Nestle, Eric Rimm, Gus Schumacher, Debbie Shore, Naomi Starkman, and Arlin Wasserman. The inaugural honorees were: Will Allen, Fedele Bauccio, Debra Eschmeyer, Sheri Flies, Jan Kees Vis, Fred Kirschenmann, First Lady Michelle Obama, Janet Poppendieck, Alice Waters, and Craig Watson. The program is partially underwritten by a grant from the GRACE Communications Foundation.

The 2012 Leadership Award recipients are to be honored at a dinner ceremony emceed by chef, restaurateur, cookbook author, and James Beard Award winner John Besh. The presentation will take place during the James Beard Foundation's third annual Food Conference on October 17, 2012, at Hearst Tower in New York City. The conference, *A Crisis in Confidence: Creating a Better, More Sustainable Food World We Can Trust* is co-hosted by *Good Housekeeping* and will take place on October 17 and 18, 2012. Founding support for the JBF Food Conference was provided by EDENS, GRACE Communications Foundation, and Sodexo. The conference is also made possible with support from Karp Resources and the Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund. For more information, visit jbfconference.org or follow hashtag #JBFLeads.

Both the Leadership Awards and the Food Conference further the work of the James Beard Foundation to highlight the importance of food and the culinary arts in our culture and to establish and support links between these arts, the community, and the key sustainability and public health issues of our time.

Tickets to the Leadership Awards dinner are available for \$1,000, and tables of ten are available for \$10,000. A portion of each ticket or table purchase is tax-deductible as allowed by law. For event information or to purchase tickets, please contact Bowen & Company at 914.231.6180 or jamesbeard@bowenandco.com. Details can also be found at jbfleadershipawards.org.

About the James Beard Foundation

Founded in 1986, the James Beard Foundation is dedicated to celebrating, nurturing, and preserving America's diverse culinary heritage and future. A cookbook author and teacher, James Beard was a champion of American cuisine who helped educate and mentor generations of professional chefs and food enthusiasts. Today the Beard Foundation continues in the same spirit by offering a variety of events and programs designed to educate, inspire, entertain, and foster a deeper understanding of our culinary culture. These programs include educational initiatives, food industry awards, an annual national food conference, Leadership Awards program, culinary scholarships, and publications. In addition to maintaining the historic James Beard House in New York City's Greenwich Village as a "performance space" for visiting chefs, the Foundation has created a robust online community, and hosts tastings, lectures, workshops, and food-related art exhibits in New York City and around the country. For more information, please visit jamesbeard.org. You can find insights on food at the James Beard Foundation's blog *Delights & Prejudices*, become a JBF member at jamesbeard.org/join, like the James Beard Foundation on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/jamesbeardfoundation), and follow the James Beard Foundation on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/jamesbeardfoundation) and [Pinterest](https://www.pinterest.com/jamesbeardfoundation).

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