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## **WOLFGANG PUCK, CELEBRITY CHEF, RESTAURATEUR AND CULINARY LEGEND, NAMED 2012 JAMES BEARD FOUNDATION LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD WINNER**

**New York, NY (January 30, 2012)** – The James Beard Foundation announced today that **Wolfgang Puck**, a multiple James Beard Award–winning chef and restaurateur acclaimed for his contributions to the culinary industry, has been named the recipient of the 2012 James Beard Foundation Lifetime Achievement Award. Each year, this award is bestowed upon someone whose lifetime body of work has had a positive and long-lasting impact on the way we eat, cook, and/or think about food in America. Wolfgang Puck will be honored at this year’s James Beard Foundation Awards, the nation’s most prestigious recognition program honoring professionals in the food and beverage industries, on **Monday, May 7, 2012** at Lincoln Center’s Avery Fisher Hall in New York City.

“The Lifetime Achievement Award recognizes passion, inspiration and a commitment to doing good work that goes beyond any individual’s contribution,” said Susan Ungaro, President of the James Beard Foundation. “This year, as we celebrate 25 years of the James Beard Foundation, I’m honored to commemorate Wolfgang Puck’s remarkable achievements in our industry. He cooked the first guest-chef dinner at the James Beard House in 1987 and has won multiple Beard Awards. He is the only person to win Outstanding Chef twice,” Ungaro explained, “Wolfgang has not only demonstrated to the industry his incredible talent but he has helped shape the industry by revolutionizing how American chefs think about food. What sets Wolfgang apart, however, is that his creativity takes him beyond our industry’s walls. As a former Humanitarian Award recipient, he has shown that the culinary industry can improve the lives of others and benefit society as a whole. Wolfgang has a long history with the Foundation,” Ungaro concluded, “and we look forward to following his achievements in our industry and beyond for years to come.”

Wolfgang Puck said, “Receiving the James Beard Foundation Lifetime Achievement Award is a tremendous honor. It was a pleasure to be the first chef to cook at the Beard House and my relationship with the Foundation has been one I’ve cherished ever since.” Wolfgang concluded, “To be recognized by such a prestigious organization with this esteemed award could not have been possible without the talented individuals that I’ve had the pleasure to work with, mentor, and befriend in my 30 years, including James. I take great honor in accepting an award that represents a lifetime of accomplishment for the work I take great pride in doing each and every day.”

A native of Austria, Wolfgang Puck has been a culinary icon for more than 30 years. For many, his name evokes Hollywood glamour. The celebrity he gained from his restaurant, Spago, which opened in 1982, escalated him from fame to stardom. It

was at Spago that Wolfgang pioneered many restaurant concepts now taken for granted: the “open kitchen;” cooking with locally sourced, seasonal ingredients; and the notion that “fine” dining need not be stuffy and formal. Wolfgang’s accomplishments continued to multiply, as he became the first name-brand chef to open a restaurant in Las Vegas, Spago in The Forum Shops at Caesars, blazing a trail for other chefs and restaurateurs to follow. Five more Vegas restaurants followed at various locations, all to critical acclaim. Today, Wolfgang has 20 fine dining restaurants including Spagos in Beverly Hills, Las Vegas, Maui, and Beaver Creek, Colorado; Chinois on Main; his ultra-elegant modern Chinese restaurant WP24, which opened in 2010 in The Ritz-Carlton, Los Angeles, and his latest historic partnership with the Hotel Bel-Air where he now oversees the food and beverage program for the entire property; and additional establishments in Singapore, London, Detroit, Dallas, Atlantic City, and Washington, D.C. Adding to his ever-growing empire, the critically acclaimed steakhouse CUT debuted in the Beverly Wilshire Hotel in 2006, and has since spawned four locations. Then there are the multiple locations of the fast-casual Wolfgang Puck Express and Wolfgang Puck Bistro. Five million fresh and frozen Wolfgang Puck pizzas are sold each year; twenty-six varieties of Wolfgang Puck canned soup are licensed to Campbell’s; and Wolfgang Puck–branded cookware, small appliances, kitchen accessories, and tableware are sold on HSN.

In addition to his appearances as a regular contributor to ABC’s *Good Morning America*, hosting an Emmy Award–winning Food Network series, “Wolfgang Puck,” in the early 2000s, and authoring six cookbooks, Wolfgang has won multiple James Beard Foundation Awards. In 1991, Wolfgang Puck became the first James Beard Foundation Outstanding Chef honoree and to date he is still the only person to be awarded that honor twice. (A winner is not eligible for five years after receiving the award.) He has received the Foundation’s Outstanding Restaurant Award for his landmark Hollywood eatery, Spago, and has collected some of the Foundation’s most notable honors such as an induction into the Who’s Who of Food and Beverage in America, which is given to those who have contributed in a substantial way to America’s constantly evolving culinary scene; and the Humanitarian Award, which is given to an individual or organization whose work in the realm of food has improved the lives of others and benefited society at large. Wolfgang has also been an honoree at the James Beard Foundation’s Chefs & Champagne® party in the Hamptons, has received a total of five Restaurant and Chef awards, and served as a James Beard Foundation Awards Host in 2010. This represents a lifetime of achievement from a man whose motto is, “Do what you love. Work hard. Be patient. And, with a little luck, you could succeed.”

On **Monday, March 19, 2012**, the Foundation will announce the final nominees for all Award categories during a press brunch at The Venetian and The Palazzo in Las Vegas, Nevada. Nominations will also be announced live via the Foundation’s Twitter page at <http://twitter.com/beardfoundation>. On **Friday, May 4, 2012**, the **James Beard Foundation Book, Broadcast & Journalism Awards Dinner**, an exclusive event honoring the nation’s top cookbook authors, culinary broadcast producers and hosts, and food journalists, will take place at Gotham Hall in New York City.

On **Monday, May 7, 2012**, the **James Beard Foundation Awards Ceremony and Gala Reception** will take place at Lincoln Center’s Avery Fisher Hall in New York City. During the event, which is open to the public, awards for the Restaurant and Chef and Restaurant Design and Graphics categories will be handed out, along with special achievement awards including Humanitarian of the Year, Lifetime Achievement, Who’s Who, and the America’s Classics award honorees. During the Gala

Reception immediately following, top culinary talents from across the country will serve dishes that reflect this year's Awards theme, "25 Years of Food at its Best," a nod to the James Beard Foundation's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Tickets to the May 7<sup>th</sup> Awards Ceremony and Gala Reception will go on sale on March 19<sup>th</sup> and can be purchased at [www.jbfawards.com](http://www.jbfawards.com) or through the Awards Box Office at 212.925.0054.

The 2012 James Beard Foundation Awards are presented with support by the following partners: Premier Sponsors: All-Clad Metalcrafters, Lenox Tableware and Gifts, Mercedes-Benz; Supporting Sponsors: The Coca-Cola Company, Delta Air Lines, Jade Range LLC, Lavazza, Southern Wine & Spirits of New York, Stella Artois®; Gala Reception Sponsors: Acqua Panna® Natural Spring Water, Ecolab, Pernod Ricard USA, Rums of Puerto Rico, S.Pellegrino® Sparkling Natural Mineral Water; and with additional support from Chefwear and St. Giles Hotel.

#### **About the James Beard Foundation**

Founded in 1986, the James Beard Foundation is dedicated to celebrating, preserving, and nurturing America's culinary heritage and diversity in order to elevate the appreciation of our culinary excellence. A cookbook author and teacher with an encyclopedic knowledge about food, James Beard, who died in 1985, was a champion of American cuisine. He helped educate and mentor generations of professional chefs and food enthusiasts. Today, the Beard Foundation continues in the same spirit by administering a number of diverse programs that include educational initiatives, food industry awards, scholarships to culinary schools, and publications, and by maintaining the historic James Beard House in New York City's Greenwich Village as a "performance space" for visiting chefs. For more information, please visit [www.jamesbeard.org](http://www.jamesbeard.org). Find insights on food at the James Beard Foundation's blog [Delights & Prejudices](#). Join the James Beard Foundation on [Facebook](#). Follow the James Beard Foundation on [Twitter](#).

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