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**JAMES
BEARD
FOUNDATION**

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RESTAURANT & FOOD VISIONARIES AWARDED JAMES BEARD FOUNDATION HIGH HONORS

**RICHARD MELMAN NAMED 2015 LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD RECIPIENT
MICHEL NISCHAN NAMED 2015 HUMANITARIAN OF THE YEAR AWARD RECIPIENT**

New York, NY (January 26, 2015) – The James Beard Foundation announced today that **Richard Melman**, renowned restaurateur, and **Michel Nischan**, acclaimed leader in the sustainable food movement, have been named the recipients of the 2015 James Beard Foundation Lifetime Achievement award and Humanitarian of the Year award, respectively. The Lifetime Achievement award is bestowed upon a person in the industry whose lifetime body of work has had a positive and long-lasting impact on the way we eat, cook, and think about food in America, while the Humanitarian of the Year award 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. Richard Melman and Michel Nischan will be honored at this year's James Beard Foundation Awards presented by Lexus, on **Monday, May 4, 2015** at Lyric Opera of Chicago.

"These two honors are standing ovation moments during our awards ceremony," said Susan Ungaro, president of the James Beard Foundation. "I am so delighted we are honoring two men whose contributions to our industry have spanned decades and impacted countless lives. We know that they will continue to share their knowledge, good work, and love of the food world for years to come."

Richard Melman, founder and chairman of Lettuce Entertain You Enterprises, a Chicago-based corporation that owns over 100 restaurants nationwide, has dedicated his life to the restaurant business. The two-time James Beard Foundation Award winner spent his early days working in a series of restaurants, including a family-owned establishment. In 1971 he and partner Jerry A. Orzoff opened R.J. Grunts, a hip burger joint that soon became one of the hottest restaurants in Chicago. Melman and Orzoff revolutionized food, presenting it with a sense of humor and creating a fun and youthful vibe, which paved the way for dining out as entertainment, a trend that swept this country in the early 1970s.

Melman and Orzoff continued to develop restaurant concepts together until Orzoff's passing in 1981. Through his relationship with Orzoff, Melman formulated a philosophy based on the importance of partners, shared profits and responsibilities, joint growth, and personal development. Today Melman has over 60 working partners, most of whom have advanced through the organization. As a mentor to chefs and restaurateurs, Melman has established himself as a leader in the nation's restaurant world, enabling others to create businesses that set standards in the food industry from casual to fine dining. Melman's passion for the culinary industry is something he has passed along to his three children who are all successful restaurateurs themselves.

"I am thrilled and honored to be the recipient of the Lifetime Achievement award from the James Beard Foundation," said Melman. "It is always wonderful to be recognized by your peers, and to receive the award in my hometown of Chicago gives it even greater meaning."

The 2015 Humanitarian of the Year award recipient, chef Michel Nischan, is a trailblazer of the sustainable food movement and celebrity chef with over 30 years of experience advocating for a more local and regenerative food system. The two-time James Beard Foundation Award winner is founder and partner of the former Dressing Room Restaurant with the late actor Paul Newman, co-founder of the Chefs Action Network, and, most notably, founder, president, and CEO of Wholesome Wave.

Nischan and his team at Wholesome Wave have been at the forefront of advocating for a healthful, equitable, and more sustainable food system since the organization's inception in 2007. At its core, Wholesome Wave aims to allow people in underserved food areas to make healthier food choices by increasing affordability and access to locally grown food and provides local farm business with increased revenue opportunities. In 2008 Wholesome Wave piloted the Double Value Coupon Program at 12 markets in three states. Since then the organization has launched numerous initiatives, including the Fruit and Vegetable Prescription Program and Healthy Food Commerce Investments. As a result of sharing Wholesome Wave program outcomes with key decision makers in states, cities, Congress and at federal agencies, the recently passed Federal Farm Bill includes legislative language supporting the doubling of food stamps used to purchase fruits and vegetables at farm-to-retail outlets. With Nischan's efforts, the Wholesome Wave program has become a model for forward-thinking, imaginative solutions that go beyond charity to focus on economic viability.

"I am indescribably humbled to be chosen for this prestigious award, especially given the many culinary leaders who work to make real change happen," said Nischan. "The James Beard Foundation continues to strengthen our community, making the world a better place through good food and genuine hospitality. We grow that focus to ensure

that people in need have affordable access to wholesome, delicious food. I wholeheartedly agree with James when he said, 'Food is our common ground.'"

On **Tuesday, March 24, 2015**, the Foundation will announce the final nominees for all award categories during a press breakfast at the James Beard House. Nominations will be announced live via the Foundation's Twitter feed at twitter.com/beardfoundation.

On **Friday, April 24, 2015**, the **James Beard Foundation Book, Broadcast, and 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 Pier Sixty at Chelsea Piers in New York City.

The **James Beard Foundation Awards Ceremony and Gala Reception** will take place at Lyric Opera of Chicago on **Monday, May 4, 2015**. During the event, which is open to the public, awards for the Restaurant and Chef and Restaurant Design categories will be handed out, along with special achievement awards including Humanitarian of the Year, Lifetime Achievement, Who's Who of Food and Beverage in America, and America's Classics. A gala reception will immediately follow, featuring top chefs and beverage professionals from across the country.

Established in 1990, the James Beard Awards recognize culinary professionals for excellence and achievement in their fields and further the Foundation's mission to celebrate, nurture, and honor America's diverse culinary heritage through programs that educate and inspire. Each award category has an individual committee made up of industry professionals who volunteer their time to oversee the policies, procedures, and selection of judges for their respective Awards program. All JBF Award winners receive a certificate and a medallion engraved with the James Beard Foundation Awards insignia. There are no cash prizes.

The 2015 James Beard Foundation Awards are presented by Lexus; in association with Enjoy Illinois, HMSHost and Mariano's; and the following partners: Premier Sponsors: All-Clad Metalcrafters, BACARDÍ® GRAN RESERVA, Lenox Tableware and Gifts, True Refrigeration®; Supporting Sponsors: Acqua Panna® Natural Spring Water, Breville, Goose Island Beer Company, Lavazza, S.Pellegrino® Sparkling Natural Mineral Water, Valrhona; Gala Reception Sponsors: Ecolab, Tanqueray No. TEN®, Waldorf Astoria Hotels & Resorts; with additional support from: Chefwear and VerTerra Dinnerware. The James Beard Foundation also gratefully acknowledges the generous support of the Chicago Department of Aviation, Choose Chicago and the Illinois Restaurant Association.

About the James Beard Foundation (JBF)

Founded in 1986, the James Beard Foundation celebrates, nurtures, and honors America's diverse culinary heritage through programs that educate and inspire. 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, instilling in them the value of wholesome, healthful, and delicious food. Today JBF continues in the same spirit by administering a number of diverse programs that include educational initiatives, food industry awards, scholarships for culinary students, publications, chef advocacy training, and thought-leader convening. The Foundation also maintains the historic James Beard House in New York City's Greenwich Village as a "performance space" for visiting chefs. In September of 2012, JBF launched the Diplomatic Culinary Partnership with the U.S. Department of State's Office of Protocol and helped create the American Chef Corps as a way to champion American chefs abroad, promote American food products, and foster an interest in American culinary culture and history through international programs and initiatives. One such project is the next world's fair, Expo Milano 2015, for which the James Beard Foundation is co-leading the effort for the State Department to design and produce the USA Pavilion, a global gathering of 147 countries addressing the challenges of how we will feed ourselves in the future. The pavilion, whose theme will be "American Food 2.0: United to Feed the Planet," will showcase America's contributions to global food security and gastronomy. For more information, please visit 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](#) and [Instagram](#).

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