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James Beard Foundation and Vermilion Announce Winners of the Women in Culinary Leadership Cookoff

Elizabeth Kozemchak and Raechal Maat Recipients of Year-Long Internship Grant and Mentoring Program

New York, NY (February 27, 2013) – Yesterday the [James Beard Foundation](#) (JBF) and [Vermilion](#) hosted their [Women in Culinary Leadership Cookoff](#). At the end of the two-hour competition, Elizabeth Kozemchak and Raechal Maat were named the winners. Each will receive a \$500 per week grant, along with a one-year apprenticeship at Vermilion’s locations in New York City and Chicago. They will also spend one week training at the historic James Beard House, where guest chefs prepare one-of-kind dinners on more than 200 nights each year.

As part of the James Beard Foundation Vermilion Women in Culinary Leadership Program, which launched last fall, the contest was created to identify ambitious women chefs and restaurateurs and help them develop their leadership and culinary skills. Entrants had to submit a resume, essay, and recipe for one contemporary Indian-Latin dish. Eight finalists participated in the cookoff at Vermilion restaurant in New York City.

Each contestant’s dish was judged by a panel that included James Beard Award winner Aarón Sanchez, co-star of Food Network’s *Heat Seekers* and *Chopped* and executive chef and owner of Mestizo; Dorothy Cann Hamilton, founder and CEO, the International Culinary Center; Rohini Dey, founder and owner, Vermilion; and Susan Ungaro, president, James Beard Foundation.

Maine resident Elizabeth Kozemchak, a U.S. Army soldier who served in Operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield, military wife, and proud mother of three, prepared Garam Masala Marinated Lamb Chops and Tomato Coconut Curry. Raechal Maat, a Johnson & Wales graduate who currently hails from Chicago and has lived in Asia, prepared Egg Hoppers with Citrus Salad and Manchamantel Pork.

The winners, along with contestants Shirel Berger, Eliza Martin, Goldie Radojevich, Alison Settle, Guddia Singh, and Claire Veligdan, all received a complimentary dinner for two at the James Beard House for an upcoming event of their choice, as well as an invitation from Aarón Sanchez to tour the *Chopped* kitchen.

“I am thrilled to name Raechal and Elizabeth the winners of this competition not only because of their culinary ability but most importantly, their capacity to lead,” said Dey, who is spearheading these efforts along with Susan Ungaro. “We were looking for women who are not just world-class chefs, but women who will go beyond that.”

“It was very difficult for us to make a decision - all eight women who competed were extraordinary. But Raechal and Elizabeth brought their culinary abilities to another level with their demonstration of great leadership potential,” added Ungaro. “This cookoff was designed to make real change in the lives of women chefs and restaurateurs. I am thrilled to welcome Raechal and Elizabeth to our Women in Culinary Leadership family and look forward to their many future successes.”

Winners will also have the opportunity to work with one of the Vermilion [Chefs for Women](#) participating celebrity chefs including Aarón Sanchez, Emily Luchetti, Michelle Bernstein, Lorena Garcia, Douglas Rodriguez, Patricio Sandoval, Sue Torres, Carmen Gonzalez, Anthony Lamas, and Susan Weaver.

“Two of my biggest influences in cooking are my grandma and my mom,” said Aarón Sanchez. “So it’s natural for me to see this progression of women leading the culinary charge.”

For more information about the Women in Culinary Leadership Program, visit www.jamesbeard.org/education/women-culinary-leadership-program.

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 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 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, 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, the Foundation 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. For more information, please visit 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](#) and [Instagram](#).

About Vermilion

Known for its bold and unique Indian-Latin cuisine, [Vermilion](#) (NYC & Chicago) is founded by former World Banker and McKinsey management consultant Rohini Dey, Ph.D. The melding at Vermilion is driven by Rohini’s passion for culinary, her concept and travels. It is based on the deep historical cross-influences and geographical commonalities of the two regions, and an intellectually provocative evolution. Vermilion has been lauded for being both a woman-led entity and for its Indian-Latin cuisine by FT, Time, Gourmet, WSJ, Chicago Tribune 3 stars, Chicago magazine, Bon Appetit, Esquire, USA Today, Travel & Leisure, Town & Country, Wine Enthusiast among others. Apart from the platform of both her restaurants, Rohini is active in educating and mentoring women through her non-profit (MSEdG – Educate Girls Globally) to which all her writing proceeds are donated, as a senior donor of the American India Foundation, her active involvement with the International Women’s Forum and The Chicago Network, and by contributing to the entrepreneurial programs of leading business schools (Kellogg, Chicago Booth, Columbia).

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