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**JAMES
BEARD
FOUNDATION**

James Beard Foundation Kicks Off Summer with Better Burgers

*~ Better Burger Project™ will challenge chefs across the nation to
include mushroom-blended burgers on their menus ~*

New York, NY (May 18, 2015) – Burger season just got better. The James Beard Foundation (JBF) is kicking off the Better Burger Project™ just in time to heat up the grill. In partnership with the Mushroom Council, JBF is challenging chefs and restaurants nationwide to create a delicious, healthier, and more sustainable hamburger by blending ground meat with finely chopped, cultivated mushrooms. Chefs competing in the Better Burger Project™ will feature their “better burger” on menus from Memorial Day, 2015, through July 31, 2015, and America will vote for their favorites through an Instagram-based social media challenge.

“As a chef, restaurateur, and chair of the D.C. Food Policy Committee, I’m thrilled to join the Better Burger Project™ in an effort to help educate diners across the country on the many benefits of blended burgers,” said Spike Mendelsohn. “We have an amazing opportunity to highlight how strategic food choices can reduce strain on the environment but also provide a variety of flavors and nutritional benefits. A blended burger is the perfect example of how a small change can make a significant impact on our food system.”

Diners across America can help their favorite chef win a chance to prepare their “better burger” at the official welcome reception for the annual JBF Food Conference this October at the historic James Beard House in New York City. The theme for this year’s conference will focus on the Future of Food.

To vote, diners across the United States can:

- Visit participating restaurants and order the “better burger”(see participating restaurants [here](#))
- Post a photo of the burger on Instagram
- Use the hashtag #betterburgerproject and the handle of the restaurant and/or the chef who created the burger
- Share what’s better about the burger in the caption

Why Meat + Mushrooms?

Over the last five years, through its Impact Programs, JBF has become more involved in the conversation around health and sustainability in our food system. These initiatives include the annual JBF Food

Conference, which explores timely subjects with top researchers, food entrepreneurs, farmers, biologists, activists, chefs, and other professionals; the Leadership Awards, which has recognized visionaries creating a more healthful, sustainable, and safe food world since 2011; and the Chefs Boot Camp for Policy and Change, which provides a unique opportunity for civically- and politically-minded chefs to become more effective leaders for food system change.

Highlighting the health and sustainability of mushrooms through the Better Burger Project™ is a perfect complement to the Impact Programs' values. The Blend allows chefs to create burgers that are better for their guests and the environment at large. Blending meat with mushrooms reduces calories, fat, and sodium while adding important nutrients like vitamin D, potassium, and B vitamins. A blended burger also brings more sustainable, plant-based items to menus allowing Americans to enjoy the taste and flavor of the burgers they love, knowing it's a healthier and more sustainable preparation.

"Burgers are an iconic American food, particularly for summer grilling, so we are eager to host the Better Burger Project™ and explore how blending meat with mushrooms can create new versions of burgers that are healthier and more sustainable," said Kris Moon, senior director strategy and development of the James Beard Foundation. "An exciting part of the future of food is creating better-for-you versions of beloved foods. The Better Burger Project is a great example of how we can work with chefs to make these healthier options a reality."

For more information, a list of participating chefs and restaurants, and to learn how to get involved, visit BetterBurgerProject.org and follow #betterburgerproject on Twitter and Instagram.

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 Expo Milano 2015, a global gathering of 147 countries addressing the challenges of how we will feed ourselves in the future. At Expo, the James Beard Foundation has co-lead the effort for the State Department to design and produce the USA Pavilion; the theme of the pavilion, "American Food 2.0: United to Feed the Planet," showcases 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](#). Join the James Beard Foundation on [Facebook](#). Follow the James Beard Foundation on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

About The Mushroom Council:

The Mushroom Council is composed of fresh market farmers or importers who average more than 500,000 pounds of mushrooms produced or imported annually. The mushroom program is authorized by the Mushroom Promotion, Research and Consumer Information Act of 1990 and is administered by the Mushroom Council under the supervision of the Agricultural Marketing Service. Research and promotion programs help to expand, maintain and develop markets for individual agricultural commodities in the United States and abroad. These industry self-help programs are requested and funded by the industry groups that they serve. The Blend, a Mushroom Council initiative that combines ground meat with finely chopped mushrooms, exists to make dishes better through unmatched flavor, inherent nutrition benefits and more sustainable cooking. For more information on the Mushroom Council, visit mushroomcouncil.org.