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**JAMES BEARD FOUNDATION NAMES  
2015 WHO'S WHO OF FOOD & BEVERAGE IN AMERICA INDUCTEES**

*Five Influential Culinary Professionals to be Honored at the  
James Beard Foundation Awards on Monday, May 4, 2015, in Chicago*

**New York, NY (March 13, 2015)** – The James Beard Foundation is proud to announce the five 2015 inductees to the Who's Who of Food & Beverage in America. The prestigious award is given to renowned culinary professionals who have made a significant and unique contribution to the American food and beverage industry. This year's honorees will be celebrated at the annual James Beard Foundation Awards presented by Lexus on **Monday, May 4, 2015**, at Lyric Opera of Chicago.

"This year's Who's Who honorees join an impressive group of over 250 of our country's most respected food industry leaders," said Susan Ungaro, president of the James Beard Foundation. "Their impact on cultural cuisine, food production and mixology is both substantial and exciting."

**The 2015 James Beard Foundation Awards Who's Who of Food & Beverage in America Inductees are:**

**Allan Benton, Pork Producer and Purveyor/Madisonville, Tennessee**

The owner of Benton's Smoky Mountain Country Hams, Allan Benton has been described by *Saveur* magazine as "one of the most respected producers in the United States." Benton grew up in a family that raised hogs and cured their own country hams and bacon, and he has continued this tradition ever since giving up a career as a guidance counselor and purchasing a small, ramshackle ham business in 1973. Since then Benton's hams and bacon have become the standard against which all others are measured. Slow-cured with salt, brown sugar, and sodium nitrate and aged for at least 9 months, the meat maestro's pork products are sought after by top chefs like Sean Brock, David Chang, and Hugh Acheson.

**Dale DeGross, Mixologist/NYC**

Master Mixologist Dale DeGross, a.k.a. King Cocktail, developed his extraordinary talent tending bar at esteemed establishments, most notably New York's famous Rainbow Room, where in the 1980s he pioneered a gourmet approach to recreating classic cocktails. DeGross has since been credited with reinventing the bartending profession and setting off a cocktail revival that continues to flourish. Winner of the 2009 James Beard Award for Outstanding Wine & Spirits Professional and author of *The Essential Cocktail* and *The Craft of the Cocktail*, DeGross has been hugely influential in the bar world for over three

decades. He is also a partner in the award-winning bar training program Beverage Alcohol Resource (BAR) and the founding president of the Museum of the American Cocktail.

### **Wylie Dufresne, Chef and Restaurateur/NYC**

Wylie Dufresne is a celebrated chef and restaurateur and a pioneer of molecular gastronomy. Dufresne began his career at the International Culinary Center (formerly the French Culinary Institute) before working for Jean-Georges Vongerichten at JoJo and Jean Georges in New York and Prime Steakhouse at the Bellagio in Las Vegas. In 1999 Dufresne became the opening chef at 71 Clinton Fresh Food, where he quickly established himself as a culinary trailblazer. He opened wd-50 in 2003, where his creative, eclectic, hyper-modern cooking earned national acclaim and a three-star review in the New York Times from Frank Bruni in 2008. The restaurant also received one star from the Michelin Guide in 2006, an accolade it retained in each subsequent year until its closing in November of 2014. Dufresne has been nominated for multiple James Beard Awards, including seven consecutive years in the running for Best Chef: New York, an award he won in 2013. Alder, Dufresne's second restaurant, opened in Manhattan's East Village in March 2013.

### **Nathalie Dupree, Cookbook Author and Television Personality/Charleston**

Nathalie Dupree is the author of fourteen cookbooks and the host of more than 300 national and international cooking shows that have aired on PBS, the Food Network, and the Learning Channel. She has earned wide recognition for her work, including three James Beard Awards and numerous other honors. Dupree is best known for her approachability and her deep understanding of Southern food; her 1986 book and television series, *New Southern Cooking*, helped introduce the rest of the country to both traditional and modern Southern cuisine. A former chef, Dupree spent ten years directing Rich's Cooking School in Atlanta, where she taught thousands of students. She is a founder and past president of the International Association of Culinary Professionals (IACP), a founder and board member of Southern Foodways, and a founder and past president of two chapters of Les Dames d'Escoffier, who awarded Dupree the prestigious national honor of "Grande Dame." The Maître Cuisiniers de France gave Dupree its 2013 Woman of the Year Award. She continues to write about food and is currently working on a memoir.

### **Maricel Presilla, Chef, Restaurateur, and Cookbook Author/Hoboken, New Jersey**

Maricel E. Presilla is an award-winning author, chef, and restaurateur who is widely recognized as one of the nation's pre-eminent experts on the cuisines of Latin America. In 2013 her magnum opus, *Gran Cocina Latina: The Food of Latin America*, was honored as Cookbook of the Year by the James Beard Foundation and Best General Cookbook by the IACP. She was named the Beard Foundation's Best Chef: Mid-Atlantic in 2012, and is a semifinalist for the 2015 Outstanding Chef award. A Cuban native and Miami émigré, Presilla is currently the chef and co-owner of restaurants Zafra and Cucharamama, as well as Latin gourmet market, bakery, and chocolate shop Ultramarinos, all of which are in Hoboken, New Jersey. Presilla is also extremely knowledgeable about Latin American chocolate production: in addition to having authored *The New Taste of Chocolate: A Cultural and Natural History of Chocolate with Recipes*, she's also the president of Gran Cacao, a Latin American marketing company that specializes in heirloom cacao beans, a board member for the Fine Chocolate Industry Association and America's partner of the International Chocolate Awards, the world's largest independent chocolate competition.

The James Beard Foundation's Who's Who of Food and Beverage in America is a cadre of the most accomplished food and beverage professionals in the country. Though they represent a diverse cross-section of the food and beverage industry—from chefs to journalists to farmers to business executives to scholars—each has been identified by his or her peers as having displayed remarkable talent and achievement. Begun in 1984 by *Cook's Magazine*, the Who's Who has been administered by the James Beard Foundation since 1990. Each year, a ballot of 20 possible candidates is created and distributed to the entire Who's Who group for voting.

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](https://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 including America's Classics and Restaurant Design categories will be handed out, along with special achievement awards including Humanitarian of the Year, Lifetime Achievement and Who's Who of Food and Beverage in America. 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 HMSHost, the Illinois Office of Tourism 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, Brand USA, Breville, Fine European Wines from Bulgaria, Goose Island Beer Company, Lavazza, S.Pellegrino® Sparkling Natural Mineral Water, Skuna Bay Salmon, Valrhona; Gala Reception Sponsors: Braveheart Black Angus Beef from PERFORMANCE Foodservice, Ecolab, Groupon, Tanqueray No. TEN®, Waldorf Astoria Hotels & Resorts; with additional support from: Chefwear, VerTerra Dinnerware, and Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board. 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](http://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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