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**James Beard Foundation and Vermilion Present
Women in Culinary Leadership All-Star Dinner & Panel Discussion**

Food & Wine Editor in Chief Dana Cowin moderates influential panel of industry experts including Robini Dey, Kristen Kish, Gail Simmons, Michael White, and Susan Ungaro

New York, NY (June 26, 2014) – *Is there gender imbalance in the food industry? What can successful restaurateurs do to open up opportunities for women? Does confidence play a role as to why more women may not be as successful as men in the food business?* These questions and more were dissected last night during the [James Beard Foundation \(JBF\)](#) and Vermilion’s second “Women in Culinary Leadership All-Star Dinner and Panel”.

Dana Cowin, Editor in Chief of *Food & Wine*, moderated the panel comprised of such industry experts as **Susan Ungaro**, President of the James Beard Foundation; **Rohini Dey**, Ph.D., Founder/Owner, Vermilion (NYC & Chicago); **Kristen Kish**, Winner, *Top Chef* Season 10; **Gail Simmons**, Special Projects Director, *Food & Wine*; Judge, *Top Chef*; and **Michael White**, Executive Chef/Partner, Alta Marea Group.

Among the topics explored: are women entrepreneurs not getting enough access to funding; the importance of mentoring and showing support for women working to succeed as chefs and restaurateurs; and why aren’t more women among the “Gods of Food”?

“In keeping with the James Beard Foundation’s mission to celebrate, nurture, and honor America’s diverse culinary heritage, we continue to encourage gender and ethnic diversity in all of our programming,” said Ungaro. “With the explosion of interest in the culinary profession, we as an industry need to work together to find ways to offer women more opportunities to break into the business.”

Vermilion restaurateur Rohini Dey and Susan Ungaro launched the Women in Culinary Leadership (WICL) Program in September 2012. As a female leading restaurateur in a predominately male industry, Rohini is an avid supporter of women in business and the mentorship and education of girls on a global level.

“I strongly believe that for more women to lead in our industry, besides culinary talent, we have to tangibly foster the critical skills of restaurant management and entrepreneurship,” added Rohini Dey, Founder and Owner of the Vermilion in NYC and Chicago. “By incubating women in an accelerated mentorship model, we hope to do exactly that with WICL, in addition to providing our grantees

other external resources and a network to draw on. We're now working hard to scale our program and invite restaurant groups, chefs and restaurateurs to join us in taking on WICL grantees within their organizations and in opening up half the sky to women in our industry.”

The Women in Culinary Leadership program raises funding to support a year-long or six month training program for women to build their chef, restaurateur and entrepreneurship leadership and management skills. Last night Rohini Dey welcomed special guest Eliza Martin. Martin is the program’s first grantee who began her apprenticeship under Dey in at Vermilion Chicago.

In addition to founding mentor, Rohini Dey, the Foundation also announced three new WICL mentors for 2015: Kevin Boehm and Rob Katz, Boka Restaurant Group, Chicago; Homaro Cantu, Moto, Chicago; and Tom Douglas, Tom Douglas Catering & Events, Seattle.

In addition to the Women in Culinary Leadership program, the [James Beard Foundation Scholarship Program](#) assists aspiring and established culinary professionals who plan to further their education at a licensed or accredited culinary school or hospitality institution. It also offers work-study grants for current working culinary professionals to expand their culinary experiences. As of 2014 the Foundation will have awarded over \$5 million in financial aid to 1,670 admirable recipients.

The evening featured a four-course Indian-Latin fusion dinner and a dessert of Strawberry Creamsicle served by James Beard Award–winning pastry chef, Emily Luchetti.

For more information on how to be a mentor, or to apply to be a grantee, please contact Diane Harris Brown, director of educational and community programming for the James Beard Foundation at dhbrown@jamesbeard.org.

About the James Beard Foundation

Founded in 1986, the James Beard Foundation's mission is to celebrate, nurture, and honor 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 the Beard Foundation 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, 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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