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## **JAMES BEARD FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES 2022 AMERICA'S CLASSICS AWARD HONOREES**

*Following a two-year hiatus and extensive audit of policy and procedures, the James Beard Awards® return for 2022*

**NEW YORK, NY (February 16, 2022)** – The James Beard Foundation® announced today the six recipients of its 2022 America's Classics Award. A Restaurant and Chef Awards category, the America's Classics Award is given to locally owned restaurants that have timeless appeal and are beloved regionally for quality food that reflects the character of its community. This year's honorees join the ranks of over 100 restaurants across the country that have received the Award since the category was introduced in 1998. They will be celebrated at the James Beard Restaurant and Chef Awards ceremony on Monday, June 13, at the Lyric Opera of Chicago.

The mission of the James Beard Awards is to recognize exceptional talent and achievement in the culinary arts, hospitality, media, and broader food system, as well as demonstrate commitment to racial and gender equity, community, sustainability, and a culture where all can thrive. As the preeminent benchmark for culinary excellence, the Awards program is one of many that support the James Beard Foundation's mission of Good Food For Good®.

### **The 2022 James Beard Foundation America's Classics Award winners are:**

#### **Casa Vega (13301 Ventura Blvd, Sherman Oaks, CA; Owner: Christy Vega)**

When Rafael "Ray" Vega opened Casa Vega restaurant in 1956, he helped popularize Mexican food in the San Fernando Valley. Countless diners discovered albondigas, enchiladas, sweet corn tamales, and tostadas in the tufted red leather booths. From its opening night, Casa Vega has been a family-run business where everyone is welcome, and every patron is made to feel at home. Rafael passed in 2021 from complications due to COVID-19, but his legacy lives on through his daughter Christina "Christy" Vega, who worked side-by-side with her father for 15 years before taking over the business in 2012. With her restaurant, Christy helps support the greater Latin American community in Los Angeles and beyond, partnering with organizations such as No Us Without You, a nonprofit that provides support for undocumented hospitality workers.

#### **Corinne's Place (1254 Haddon Ave, Camden, NJ; Owner: Corinne Bradley-Powers)**

Corinne Bradley-Powers has been keeping Haddon Avenue festive since 1989 with a birthday-pink dining room and a devoted post-church Sunday rush. It could be the Cajun-spiced turkey wings, the picnic-perfect black-eyed peas, the tender pig's feet in zesty sauce, the smothered pork chops, or the sweet potato pie. But there's no doubt her classic fried chicken—its simply seasoned crust fried to a golden, heat-bubbled

cracker shell concealing juicy meat—is also a prime reason this restaurant has remained an enduring touchstone for home-style soul food. Over the past three decades, it has become a pillar of community at the heart of one of America's lowest-income cities. Bradley-Powers' longevity as a business owner remains a beacon of hope that continues to inspire. During the pandemic, she transformed a vacant lot beside her storefront into a tented gathering space for tranquil outdoor dining. Known as “the oasis,” complete with a trickling fountain and warm hospitality to go along with Corinne's irresistible soul food platters, it lives up to its name.

**Solly's Grille (4629 N Port Washington Rd, Milwaukee, WI; Owner: Glenn Fieber)**

Minnesota might be home to the juicy Lucy, but its neighbor Wisconsin is home to the butter burger. While there may be claims as to who invented this rich, creamy, and meaty sandwich that pays tribute to Wisconsin's dairy heritage, it's Solly's Grille that put it on the map. Created in 1936 by Kenneth “Solly” Salmon, this sandwich features ground sirloin with stewed onions with the crowning glory of farm-fresh Wisconsin butter that overflows onto the plate. People from far and wide make the pilgrimage to this family-owned Milwaukee restaurant, an institution that boasts the use of over 130 pounds of butter per week.

**Wo Hop (17 Mott St, New York, NY; Owners: Huang Family)**

For the city that never sleeps, it's hard to imagine a restaurant that better suits New York City's hunger for delicious food any time of day. Wo Hop has inhabited the basement level of 17 Mott Street since 1938, serving a distinct brand of Chinese American food through a uniquely New York lens. Ming Huang took over the independent eatery from his uncle and describes the menu at Wo Hop as “old-fashioned, chop suey-style food,” a cuisine that Huang says is disappearing from many American Chinatowns. A trip to Wo Hop is the perfect end to any night, one that you couldn't experience anywhere else in the world.

**The Busy Bee Café (810 Martin Luther King Jr. Dr., SW Atlanta, GA; Owner: Tracy Gates)**

When Lucy Jackson opened the Busy Bee Café on what was then called Hunter Street in 1947, it was one of only two streets in the city of Atlanta open to Black entrepreneurs after the race riots pushed the community from downtown Atlanta. Martin Luther King Jr. and other civil rights icons frequented Busy Bee to enjoy a hearty meal of fried chicken, ham hocks, catfish, collard greens, macaroni cheese, cornbread, and other soulful dishes. Today, the cafe is owned by the Gates family with Tracy Gates at the helm. Tracy has worked hard to revive the restaurant to Jackson's standard of providing excellent service and consistent food preparation. It remains a community gathering spot, as well as a tourist destination, where locals, regional and international celebrities, and a bastion of comforting soul food for generations past and present come to roost.

**Florence's Restaurant (1437 Northeast 23rd Street, Oklahoma City, OK; Owner: Florence Kemp)**

Florence Jones Kemp was born in 1931 in Boley, Oklahoma, a town that was founded in the 19th century by Black pioneers. From her mother, she learned strength and grit, as well as how to plant and harvest tomatoes, onions, and okra, how to milk a cow and churn butter, and how much better farm-fresh food tastes. In 1952, she had saved enough money as a server to open her own restaurant in Oklahoma City. All she had was “two chickens and a prayer.” In the words of the *Oklahoman*, she “hunkered down and cooked her way through the longest odds to become a local institution on a long, slow, word-of-mouth campaign through social injustices and catastrophes man-made and fate-ordained.” Today, the restaurant is nearly 70 years old, and Florence Kemp is still proudly working—along with her daughter Victoria—serving the same recipes her mother taught her, with a few new ones sprinkled in, and all of it what she calls “good country food for the soul.”

The Restaurant and Chef Awards Committee reviews all recommendations submitted by the public during the open call in the fall, as well as those submitted by the voting body. The committee discusses the entries, conducts a vote, and ultimately selects the honorees. Six of the 12 regions recognized by the awards program are included within each Awards cycle and rotated to the next cycle so that each region is included every other year. To be eligible for this award, establishments must have been in existence for at least 10 years. For the full America's Classics Award eligibility criteria, please see [here](#). For more information on this year's America's Classics honorees, see [here](#).

The Restaurant and Chef Awards semifinalists will be announced on Wednesday, February 23, 2022. Restaurant and Chef Awards nominees, in addition to honorees for Leadership, Lifetime Achievement, and Humanitarian of the Year Awards will be revealed on Wednesday, March 16, 2022, in Scottsdale, AZ. Nominees for the James Beard Foundation Media Awards will be announced on Wednesday, April 27, 2022 in New York City. Both announcements will also be broadcast on Twitter Live.

The 2022 James Beard Awards will be the first in two years, after a hiatus during which the Awards underwent a full [audit](#) of its policies and procedures, continuing the work to remove bias, increase transparency and accessibility, and making the program more aligned with the Foundation's mission and values.

The 2022 James Beard Awards are presented by Capital One, the official credit card and banking partner of the James Beard Foundation. The James Beard Awards are proudly hosted by Choose Chicago and the Illinois Restaurant Association as well as with the following partners: Premier Sponsors: American Airlines, the official airline of the James Beard Foundation, S.Pellegrino® Sparkling Natural Mineral Water; Supporting Sponsors: Skuna Bay Salmon, Valrhona; Reception Sponsors: Ecolab, Kendall College at St. Louis University, and Windstar Cruises, the official cruise line of the James Beard Foundation. Intersport is the Official Broadcast Partner of the 2022 James Beard Awards.

For more information about the James Beard Foundation Awards, visit [jamesbeard.org/awards](https://jamesbeard.org/awards). For up-to-the-minute news about the Awards follow @beardfoundation on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) and keep an eye out for posts using #jbfa.

### **About the James Beard Awards**

The James Beard Awards recognizes exceptional talent and achievement in the culinary arts, hospitality, media, and broader food system, as well as a demonstrated commitment to racial and gender equity, community, sustainability, and a culture where all can thrive. Established in 1990, the James Beard Awards are among the nation's most prestigious honors recognizing leaders in the culinary and food media industries. The Awards are overseen by the Awards Committee. Each Awards program (Books, Broadcast Media, Journalism, Leadership, and Restaurant and Chef) has its own subcommittee members who volunteer their time to oversee the policies, procedures, and selection of judges for their respective program. All James Beard Award winners receive a certificate and a medallion engraved with the James Beard Foundation Awards insignia. For more information, subscribe to the [Awards digital newsletter](#).

### **About the James Beard Foundation**

The James Beard Foundation celebrates and supports the people behind America's food culture, while pushing for new standards in the restaurant industry to create a future where all have the opportunity to thrive. Established over 30 years ago, the Foundation has highlighted the centrality of food culture in our daily lives and is committed to supporting a resilient and flourishing industry that honors its diverse communities. By amplifying new voices, celebrating those leading the way, and supporting those on the path to do so, the Foundation is working to create a more equitable and sustainable future—what we call Good Food for Good™. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the James Beard Foundation launched the Open for Good campaign to ensure that independent restaurants not only survive, but that the industry is able to rebuild stronger than before. For more information, subscribe to the digital newsletter [Beard Bites](#) and follow @beardfoundation on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [TikTok](#), and [Clubhouse](#). The James Beard Foundation is a national not-for-profit 501c(3) organization based in New York City.

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