

For Immediate Release

James Beard Foundation

JAMES BEARD FOUNDATION® ANNOUNCES 2022 LEGACY NETWORK COHORT

*Organization connects 13 emerging industry advisors and 12 advisees
to advance equitable leadership in industry*

NEW YORK, NY (August 9, 2022) – The James Beard Foundation® today announces this year’s participating advisors and advisees as part of the [Legacy Network](#). Created with founding support from Woodford Reserve®, the Legacy Network trains emerging leaders across the culinary industry and connects them with future generations of excellence. By developing the professional capacity of participants, in addition to cultivating a support network of peers, the Legacy program aims to advance equitable, culturally relevant leadership in the industry.

“We are thrilled to announce this year’s cohort of Legacy Network participants,” said **Colleen Vincent, vice president of community of the James Beard Foundation**. “Now more than ever, it is critical that we support emerging leaders in this industry, particularly those from the BIPOC community. This program plays a huge part in the James Beard Foundation’s mission to celebrate, support, and elevate the people behind America’s food culture, while pushing for new standards in the restaurant industry where all have the opportunity to thrive.”

This year’s cohort features 25 participants—13 advisors and 12 advisees—all of whom were selected to take part in the eight-month program that includes mentorship, business development, and operations training. The advisees, under the guidance of the Legacy advisors, become part of a powerful network that centers the professional growth of talent from historically under-resourced communities. Amongst this year’s participants are James Beard Foundation Award nominees, Women’s Entrepreneurial Leadership Program (WEL) alum, Beard House Fellows, and Foundation grant recipients. The Legacy Network seeks to ensure participant career paths are dynamic, equitable, and sustainable. The program concludes with an experiential trip to the Woodford Reserve® Distillery in Versailles, Kentucky, hosted by Founding Partner Woodford Reserve®.

The 2022 Advisors are:

- **Selasie Dotse:** Selasie Dotse is chef de cuisine at Hi Felicia in Oakland. She draws from her own experiences in Ghana and the American South to enhance her guests’ appreciation for the cuisine of the African diaspora. Every meal—whether a pop-up with fellow chefs or at one of the many high-caliber restaurants where she has put down roots—tells a history and cultivates a community.

- **Paula Gonzales-Thomas:** A native of Cali, Colombia, Paula Gonzalez-Thomas has gathered experience and wisdom from every stage of the food system and every corner of the kitchen. Paula teaches at the School of Hospitality at MSU Denver and is a board member of the Denver Sustainability Food Policy Council. As a mentor, she seeks to help the next generation of restaurant leaders put sustainability first.
- **Carlo Lamagna:** Carlo Lamagna is a Philippine-born, Detroit-raised, CIA-trained chef. His restaurant Magna Kusina and pop-up series Twisted Filipino have garnered wide praise, including a 2022 James Beard Award nomination for Best Chef: Pacific and Northwest and inclusion in *Food & Wine Magazine's* Best New Chefs of 2021.
- **LaToya Larkin:** LaToya Larkin is the founder of It's Thyme 4 a Change, a nonprofit dedicated to providing at-risk youth with culinary, entrepreneurship, and life skills. In addition, LaToya has run Not Enough Thyme Personal Chef Services since 2006, and Black Girl Tamales, her signature gourmet tamale company, established in 2019.
- **Adrian Lipscombe:** Adrian opened Uptowne Café in La Crosse, Wisconsin in 2016, where she highlighted the intersection of her Southern upbringing, Midwestern ingredients, and African American culinary history. In June of 2020, Adrian established the 40 Acres Project, which seeks to preserve the legacy of Black agriculture and foodways. Adrian is also a founding member of the Muloma Heritage Center, a nonprofit that explores African-Atlantic influences in American culture.
- **Tudor Montague:** In 2015, Tudor Montague founded Spirit Mountain Roasting Co. As an enrolled member of the Fort Yuma Quechan tribe of California, Tudor is passionate about crafting coffee that is Indigenous from seed to cup. Spirit Mountain Roasting Co. is a grant recipient of the James Beard Investment Fund for Black and Indigenous Americans.
- **Shota Nakajima:** Shota Nakajima blends the art of Japanese cuisine with American influence at Taku in Seattle. Shota has been a James Beard Award semifinalist in 2018, 2019, and 2020. He has competed on *Iron Chef Gauntlet*, *Beat Bobby Flay*, and *Top Chef*, and has received an *Eater* 'Young Guns' award and *Zagat's* '30 under 30' chef designation, among other accolades.
- **Judy Ni:** The daughter of immigrants with multiple postgraduate degrees, Judy Ni was expected to follow an academic path. However, she always dreamed of opening a restaurant rooted in her family's Taiwanese recipes. In 2017, Judy and her husband Andy Tessier opened bāo•logy, a fast-casual Taiwanese restaurant in Philadelphia. Judy also co-founded the nonprofit Hospitality Together, which reimagines how students can pursue education and build a career in hospitality.
- **Sadhana Raj:** A first-generation immigrant from India, Sadhana Raj opened up 24 Carrots, a vegan bakery, juice bar, and restaurant in 2008. Through the Legacy Network, Sadhana hopes to pass along her expertise and collaborate within the industry.

- **Tonya and David Thomas:** Tonya Thomas and David Thomas are behind multiple award-winning restaurants in Baltimore, MD. Together, they opened Herb & Soul in 2012, and David went on to become executive chef of Ida B's Table in 2016. In 2020, Tonya, David, and two friends established H3irloom Food Group, a 100% Black-owned company working to uplift the Black food narrative. The same year, David earned the title of Chopped Grand Champion on Food Network's show Chopped. Tonya is the principal of Nostalgia Baking Company and is involved with TasteWise Kids and the Muloma Heritage Center.
- **Dr. Christine Wachira:** While working her way through college and earning her doctorate, Christine (Chris) fell in love with the science and community of winemaking. In 2017, Chris founded Wachria Wines in Alameda County, California, the first Kenyan-American winery in the U.S. Chris also founded The Wachira Group to bridge the gap for minorities, women, and local makers in the beer, wine, and spirits industry.
- **Crystal Wahpepah:** Crystal Wahpepah is an enrolled member of the Kickapoo nation of Oklahoma and owner of Wahpepah's Kitchen in Oakland, CA. A successful caterer and a standard-bearer for Native foodways and food sovereignty, she invites diners to ponder the true source of dishes, which requires gratitude for the farmers, a reflection on the plants and animals, and an acknowledgment of the stolen land that feeds us. Crystal was a 2022 James Beard Award nominee for Emerging Chef.

The 2022 Advisees are:

- **Lay Alston:** After honing her craft at New York's Food and Finance High School, Careers Through Culinary Arts (C-CAP), and the Culinary Institute of New York-Monroe College, Lay worked at Café Boulud, Morimoto, and Red Rooster Harlem, and also staged at Kitchen & Table in Stockholm, Sweden. The James Beard House Fellows alumna is now developing an upscale mobile food experience, Soul & Wheel.
- **Charity Blanchett:** After observing a lack of diversity in the culinary industry, Charity Blanchett founded the Dipping Spoon Foundation, a nonprofit that provides scholarships to up-and-coming BIPOC and women chefs. Charity is an alumna of the James Beard Foundation's former Owning It! program. She recently relocated from Alaska to New Orleans.
- **Mimi Chen:** After graduating from the International Culinary Center (ICC), Mimi worked under Daniel Boulud at Café Boulud and Restaurant DANIEL in New York. In 2019, she landed a spot on Team USA's roster for the Bocuse d'Or competition in Lyon, France. Mimi is also a James Beard House Fellows alumna.
- **Walter Green:** Walter worked in local Chicago restaurants in his youth before his career veered toward the Army and, later, information technology. But his heart never stepped outside the kitchen, and in 2019, he opened Uncle Willie's Wings in Newark, New Jersey. Uncle Willie's Wings is also a recipient of the James Beard Investment Fund for Black and Indigenous Americans.

- **Melissa Guzman:** Melissa stumbled into kitchens while pursuing a career as a comedy writer. Her food truck, The Caribe Vegan, seeks to change guests' minds about what both vegan food and Island Cuisine can be. The Caribe Vegan was a recipient of the James Beard Investment Fund for Black and Indigenous Americans.
- **Kirby Jones:** Kirby's New Orleans roots run deep, as her family traces their Creole lineage back over 300 years. Kirby shares her heritage at her café, La Vie En Rose, where she serves warm hospitality alongside coffee and delectable pastries. La Vie En Rose was a recipient of the James Beard Investment Fund for Black and Indigenous Americans.
- **Jessica Kehinde Ngo:** With a MFA in creative nonfiction, Jessica focused on teaching for nearly a decade, highlighting how food appears in works of fiction, drama, and poetry. In recent years, she has devoted more of her energy to her own writing, which has appeared in *Epicurious*, *Stained Page News*, *Taste*, and *The Counter*.
- **Adjoa Kittoe:** Adjoa started her career in her tiny Brooklyn kitchen, meal prepping for a handful of clients. Now, she wants to turn her catering business, Seulful Pantry, into a sustainable nonprofit with a focus on Black foodways, agriculture, technology, and the culinary world.
- **Derrick Lewis:** Derrick made his way from Alabama to Florida working at various kitchens across the country. Derrick recently launched Well Kept Services LLC, a food service organization that provides Southern-style comfort food at various locations through Sweet Handz food truck and Well Kept Catering.
- **Prince Lobo:** Prince took up the reins of his mother's New Orleans Ethiopian restaurant, Addis Nola, at only 24 years old. As the owner, he instituted wine pairings, a reinvigorated dessert program, and a dynamic social media presence to help spread the story of his family's cuisine.
- **Nashali Rivera:** Nashali began cooking at New York's Food and Finance High School before deepening her knowledge at the Culinary Institute of New York. After a few years in kitchen brigades, she now serves as the executive chef of a Newark, New Jersey charter school district. Nashali is also a James Beard House Fellow alumna.
- **Ani Steele:** In her years working as a social worker, Ani Steele observed food's ability to facilitate the sharing of people's stories, experiences, and cultures. Now, as a food writer, she has continued to build communities and conversations around the dining table, with a particular interest in exploring cultural and institutional representations of the cuisines of the African diaspora.

Visual media assets of the Legacy Program can be found at the following links, including correct attribution:

- **Legacy Program [video clip](#)** (© Nimbus on behalf of the James Beard Foundation and Woodford Reserve®)
- **[Headshots](#) of 2022-2023 Advisors and Advisees**
- **Legacy Program [photo selects](#)** (© Gary Barragan)

“These 25 people represent the diversity of industry leadership,” said **Vincent**. “This year, the cohort now includes Asian American and Latin American professionals, as well as Black and Indigenous ones. Their collective experience includes education, food systems advocacy, culinary, and spirits. We look forward to seeing the immense impact they will make in the industry.”

The Legacy Network Program was launched with founding support from Woodford Reserve®.

The James Beard Foundation’s programs are supported by Capital One, the official credit card and banking partner of the James Beard Foundation; American Airlines, the official airline of the James Beard Foundation; and Windstar Cruises, the official cruise line of the James Beard Foundation.

To learn more about the Legacy Network program and other James Beard Foundation programs, visit <https://www.jamesbeard.org/legacy-network>.

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About the James Beard Foundation

The James Beard Foundation (JBF) 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 501c3 non-profit organization, JBF brings its mission to life through annual Awards, industry and community-focused initiatives and programs, advocacy, and events. Current programs include the **Chef Bootcamp for Policy and Change**, **Beard House Fellows**, **Legacy Network**, **Scholarship Programs**, **Smart Catch**, **Women’s Leadership Programs**, and **Open For Good Campaign**. In addition, JBF celebrates the chefs and local independent restaurants at the heart of our communities with numerous events and partnerships nationwide throughout the year—including the **Taste America** culinary tour, **JBF Greens** events for foodies under 40, the soon-to-open **Pier 57 Market Hall**, food festivals, and more.

For more information, subscribe to the digital newsletter [Beard Bites](#) and follow [@beardfoundation](#) on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [TikTok](#), [LinkedIn](#).

For industry leaders and employees, subscribe to JBF’s [Industry Support Newsletter](#) or access a range of resources on our [Industry Support page](#), including published reports, a Virtual Education Library, and monthly Chef’s Connect events.

About Woodford Reserve

Woodford Reserve, the world's top-selling super-premium American whiskey, has supported culinary leaders and programs for many years. It was among the first spirits brands to pair food with bourbon tastings, similar to the wine industry. Woodford Reserve, "Presenting Sponsor of the Kentucky Derby," is crafted at the historic Woodford Reserve Distillery, tucked in the heart of thoroughbred country in Versailles, Kentucky. A National Historic Landmark, the Woodford Reserve Distillery represents craftsmanship with a balance of historic heritage and modern practices. Woodford Reserve is a product of the Brown-Forman Corporation, a premier producer and marketer of fine quality beverage alcohol brands including Jack Daniel's, Finlandia, Korbel, Tequila Herradura, Old Forester, Sonoma-Cutrer and Chambord. Please enjoy your bourbon responsibly. To learn more about Woodford Reserve, visit us www.woodfordreserve.com or check us out on Facebook at www.facebook.com/woodfordreserve.

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