



## JAMES BEARD FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES 2017 AMERICA'S CLASSICS AWARD HONOREES

FOR  
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RELEASE

Mary Blanton Ogushwitz /  
Jane Shapiro

Magrino

212 957 3005

[mary.blanton@smapr.com](mailto:mary.blanton@smapr.com)  
[jane.shapiro@smapr.com](mailto:jane.shapiro@smapr.com)

NEW YORK, NY (January 25, 2017) - The James Beard Foundation announced today the five recipients of its 2017 America's Classics award. The America's Classics award is given to restaurants that have timeless appeal and are cherished for quality food that reflects the character of their community. The 2017 honorees join the ranks of nearly 100 restaurants that have received the award since the category was first introduced in 1998. This year's winners will be celebrated at the 27th annual James Beard Foundation Awards Gala on Monday, May 1, 2017 at the Lyric Opera of Chicago.

"In an ever-changing culinary landscape, these honorees have created enduring restaurants and food establishments that have not only stood the test of time, but continue to bring people together in celebration of the unique flavors in America's vast food scene," says Susan Ungaro, president of the James Beard Foundation. "James Beard would have admired how each of these honorees authentically reflects the character and hospitality of their communities."

**The 2017 James Beard Foundation America's Classics award winners are:**

**Bertha's Kitchen (2332 Meeting Street Road, North Charleston, SC; Owners: Julia Grant, Linda Pinckney and Sharon Coakley)**

On North Meeting Street, the flavors of the Lowcountry boldly emanate from this robin's-egg-blue spot, where Albertha Grant first opened shop in 1980. Her presence is still felt each time a cook hefts a stewpot to the stove and tosses in a seasoning hunk of sidemeat. Vibrant family portraits by Charleston muralist Charles DeSaussure line the walls. Today, her daughters Julia Grant, Linda Pinckney, and Sharon Coakley serve fried whiting, fried pork chops, red rice, prioleau rice, stewed chicken neck with gizzards and lima beans. Regulars queue the cafeteria line before eleven each morning. Construction workers exit with foam clamshells of Gullah excellence. Okra soup, a dark garlicky stew, thick with tomatoes, and clods of pork in a richly aromatic broth, is worth the trip alone. This soulful restaurant connects modern diners with traditional food ways and shines as a paragon of the region's living culinary history.



# JAMES BEARD AWARDS

## **Gioia's Deli (1934 Macklind Avenue, St. Louis, MO; Owner: Alex Donley)**

For a century, Gioia's has been a fixture of the Hill, the neighborhood that is the heart of St. Louis' Italian-American community. First it served the community as a grocery store, run by Marcallo, Italy, native Challie Gioia. Since Cathy Donley bought it in 1980, the building, built from brick and wood from the 1904 World's Fair, has functioned as a lunch restaurant. Through it all, the recipe for Gioia's signature hot salami hasn't changed. The salami is hot as in temperature, not as in spice. That said, the (mostly) secret blend of pork-head meat, beef and seasonings packs a peppery bite. It's a fresh, boiled sausage, with a texture like coarse pâté and a flavor that is porky, earthy, a little funky. Topped with the city's beloved cheese, Provel, it's a dish that has traveled from Italian to Italian-American to thoroughly St. Louisan.

## **La Taqueria (2889 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA; Owner: Miguel Jara)**

The Mission-style burrito is a beloved expression and encapsulation of Mexican-American culinary heritage in the Bay Area. Burrito connoisseurs endlessly debate which taqueria makes the definitive version of the foil-wrapped, all-in-one meal of meats, beans, rice, cheese, and more, wrapped in a whopper of a flour tortilla, and often called a "silver torpedo." Through the years, La Taqueria has stood out as a standard-bearer, and a barometer upon which to argue over other burritos. Jara is from villa Guerrero, Jalisco and grew up in Tijuana. The burritos he serves are not of any specific region of Mexico. At his counter-service restaurant, filled with simple wooden tables, Jara rejects the beans-and-rice approach, doubles down on the meat, and griddles his burritos golden-brown. Discussions about the merits and culture of the burrito form always, at some point, lead to La Taqueria, where the line to get gets more and more absurd as time goes by, but the quality stays high.

## **Sahadi's (187 Atlantic Avenue, Brooklyn, NY; Owners: Christina Sahadi Whelan and Ron Sahadi)**

Atlantic Avenue, between the waterfront and the terminal is Brooklyn's fertile crescent, a cluster of Middle Eastern restaurants, groceries, bakeries and sundry shops. Sahadi's, at the heart of this micro-neighborhood, has a New York root system that dates to the late 19th century, when Abraham Sahadi first set up shop in downtown Manhattan. Charlie Sahadi and his brother Bob Sahadi, direct descendants of Abraham, ran the business for more than 50

# JAMES BEARD AWARDS

years with help from Charlie's wife Audrey before handing the reigns to Charlie's daughter Christine Whelan and son Ron Sahadi in 2016. Today, Sahadi's is a bulk bin wonderland, packed with locals scooping through glass jars of amaranth, pistachios, dried figs, spices, and roasted coffee, or loading their carts with pantry goods like pomegranate molasses and Middle Eastern cheeses. It all comes together in the deli, where the family stocks multiple varieties of rich, tangy labneh, vats of creamy hummus and delicious seasonal salads as well as stocking the bakery with flaky borekas and baklava, harissa-drenched lavash and Middle Eastern breads.

**Schultz's Crab House (1732 Old Eastern Avenue, Essex, MD; Owners: Karen and Bob McKinney**

Schultz's, a quintessential Maryland crab house, opened in 1950 as a cafe and lounge, run by Mildred and William Schultz. Karen and Bob McKinney took over in 1969. Their children, led by son Steve McKinney, still operate the restaurant. Schultz's resides in Essex, Maryland, a community flanked by estuaries of the Chesapeake Bay. An easy ten-mile drive from downtown Baltimore, the wood-paneled, nautical-themed dining room, where white butcher paper covers every table, sets the scene for a timeless seafood spread. In summer and fall, when Maryland crabs are at their finest, devoted regulars feast on locally caught swimmers plump with sweet meat and zinged with a house blend of spices. Regional classics, highlighting the Old Line State's signature crustacean, fill out the menu, including jumbo lump and backfin crab cakes, crab fluff (a battered and deep-fried crab cake), and dairy-rich crab imperial.

To qualify for the America's Classics award, establishments must have been in existence at least ten years and be locally owned. The honorees are selected each year by the James Beard Foundation's Restaurant & Chef Awards committee, a group composed of restaurant critics, writers, editors and other experts. The selection process begins each fall with a public call for entries, allowing anyone the opportunity to suggest candidates for the awards.

On Tuesday, April 25, 2017, the James Beard Media Awards, 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.

# JAMES BEARD AWARDS

The James Beard Foundation Awards Gala will be held at the Lyric Opera of Chicago on Monday, May 1, 2017. During the event, which is open to the public, awards for the Restaurant and Chef and Restaurant Design categories will be handed out, along with special achievement awards Humanitarian of the Year, Lifetime Achievement, Design Icon, Who's Who of Food and Beverage in America, and America's Classics. 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 furthers the Foundation's mission to celebrate, nurture, and honor chefs and other leaders making America's food culture more delicious, diverse, and sustainable for everyone. 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 2017 James Beard Foundation Awards are proudly hosted by Choose Chicago and presented in association with the Chicago Department of Aviation, HMSHost, the Illinois Restaurant Association and Mariano's as well as the following partners: Premier Sponsors: All-Clad Metalcrafters, American Airlines, True Refrigeration®; Supporting Sponsors: Acqua Panna® Natural Spring Water, Breville, Meiomì, S.Pellegrino® Sparkling Natural Mineral Water, Skuna Bay Salmon, Valrhona; Gala Reception Sponsors: Ecolab, Kendall College, Windstar; with additional support from: Chefwear, VerTerra Dinnerware.

## **About the James Beard Foundation (JBF)**

Founded in 1986, the James Beard Foundation celebrates, nurtures, and honors chefs and other leaders making America's food culture more delicious, diverse, and sustainable for everyone. A cookbook author and teacher with an encyclopedic knowledge about food, the late James Beard 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. For more information,

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# JAMES BEARD AWARDS

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