

For Immediate Release

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James Beard Foundation Will Not Name Winners at its 2020 Awards Ceremony

September 25 Broadcast Will Celebrate Previously Announced Honorees, Nominees, and Shine a Spotlight on the Path Forward for the Industry

Foundation to Also Begin Year-Long Initiative to Audit and Overhaul Awards Processes with Intent to Remove Any Systemic Bias

NEW YORK, NY (August 20, 2020) – Today the James Beard Foundation announced that its annual Awards program will not present winners in the remaining categories at the upcoming ceremony on Friday, September 25, an unprecedented decision in the Awards' 30-year history. The choice comes as restaurants continue to suffer the grave negative effects of COVID-19, and as substantial and sustained upheaval in the community has created an environment in which the Foundation believes the assignment of Awards will do little to further the industry in its current uphill battle. The Awards' usual positive impact on restaurants and chefs' businesses will likely not be fully realized due to the current state of the industry, with many restaurants closed permanently or temporarily or operating at minimal capacity. These factors helped to inform the decision not to assign winners during a time of such turmoil.

The resulting ceremony, which will be broadcast live via [Twitter](#) from the host city of Chicago, will instead celebrate previously announced honorees in categories such as America's Classics, Lifetime Achievement, Humanitarian of the Year, Design Icon, and Leadership Awards. The broadcast will also shine a spotlight on many of the nominees and be a night of storytelling surrounding the historic challenges this community faces and how we can work together to rebuild a stronger and more equitable restaurant industry.

The decision comes after serious deliberation and consultation with members of the industry, Award committees, JBF staff, and partners. "We did not come to this decision lightly," said James Beard Foundation CEO Clare Reichenbach. "The uncertainty of this time for our industry is already a hard reality and considering anyone to have won or lost within the current tumultuous hospitality ecosystem does not in fact feel like the right thing to do. In short, an honor which we know is held in high regard, at the moment, feels minor when compared to the dire situation we are in. As we strive to provide an Awards program with the highest ethical standards, one that is fair, equitable, and reflective of the industry which we serve, we know that the right move is to step back and take stock of the nominees and honorees achievements. We hope to focus our collective energy on helping our community get

through this crisis and on addressing the inequities in the industry going forward. We look forward to bringing the Awards back when the industry is once again ready for them.”

The Foundation recognizes the leadership role that it plays in the restaurant industry through the James Beard Awards and other programs. Thus, it is conducting a comprehensive internal and external review to address any bias and align the Awards with the Foundation’s mission of promoting sustainability, equity, and diversity in the restaurant industry. By definition, “honoring excellence” is an important act that requires care, judgment and openness. The Foundation is taking stock of how the Awards are administered, communicated, and presented to assure the Awards are open to all and that these judgments are made in a manner that promotes and preserves the Foundation’s mission without bias.

The Foundation has also made the decision to forgo its traditional Awards presentations in 2021. The Awards recognize work done during the previous calendar year, so any intent to hold a ceremony in 2021 based on 2020 work would be unfair and misguided, taking into account the unprecedented hardships which restaurants and potential nominees faced this year. Instead, the 2021 ceremony will be a celebration of the independent restaurant community who have shown leadership during this crisis and honoring those who have made a significant impact on the industry and in their communities. This celebration will be held in Chicago and broadcast nationwide in May 2021. The Foundation will take this time to continue the analysis of Awards-related programs with the goal of a transparent and equitable process in 2022 and beyond.

Both the long-term and immediate changes regarding the James Beard Awards processes are outlined here:

Changes for the 2020 Awards Cycle

- On September 25, previously announced winners will be honored from the following categories in a virtual ceremony to be broadcast live via [Twitter](#) from the host city of Chicago: America’s Classics, Lifetime Achievement, Humanitarian of the Year, Design Icon, and Leadership Awards.
- The broadcast will shine a spotlight on the previously announced nominees and be a night of storytelling surrounding the historic challenges this community faces and how we can work together to rebuild a stronger and more equitable restaurant industry.
- Winners will not be announced in the following Restaurant & Chef categories:
 - Best New Restaurant
 - Outstanding Baker
 - Outstanding Bar Program
 - Outstanding Chef
 - Outstanding Hospitality
 - Outstanding Pastry Chef
 - Outstanding Restaurant
 - Outstanding Restaurateur
 - Outstanding Wine Program
 - Outstanding Wine, Beer, or Spirits Producer
 - Rising Star Chef of the Year
 - Best Chef: California
 - Best Chef: Great Lakes (IL, IN, MI, OH)

- Best Chef: Mid-Atlantic (D.C., DE, MD, NJ, PA, VA)
- Best Chef: Midwest (IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD, WI)
- Best Chef: Mountain (CO, ID, MT, UT, WY)
- Best Chef: New York State
- Best Chef: Northeast (CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT)
- Best Chef: Northwest & Pacific (AK, HI, OR, WA)
- Best Chef: South (AL, AR, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, FL, LA, MS)
- Best Chef: Southeast (GA, KY, NC, SC, TN, WV)
- Best Chef: Southwest (AZ, NM, NV, OK)
- Best Chef: Texas

Changes for the Future

- The Awards Committee and Subcommittees, made up of volunteer members from within the broader food, restaurant, and media industries, will work with the Foundation and an outside social justice agency to overhaul the policies and procedures for the Awards. The objectives are to remove any systemic bias, increase the diversity of the pool of candidates, maintain relevance, and align the Awards more outwardly with the Foundation’s values of equity, equality, sustainability, and excellence for the restaurant industry.
- To thoroughly conduct this audit, allow ample time to issue new recommendations and changes to future Awards, and take into account the catastrophic effects that COVID-19 has had on the restaurant industry in 2020, the Foundation has made the decision to hold on what would be considered the “traditional” Awards in 2021. In their place, the Foundation will host an industry celebration shining a light on the members of the independent restaurant community who have shown leadership during this crisis and honoring those who have made a significant impact on the industry and in their communities when it was needed most. This celebration will be held in Chicago and broadcast nationwide in May 2021.
- The James Beard Awards will continue in their more traditional, but overhauled state, with the Entry & Recommendation Period in Fall 2021 for Awards taking place in 2022. (Eligibility rules will be expanded to include any relevant work that would have been eligible for a 2021 award.)
- The Foundation is also proud to announce the addition of Foundation trustee Tanya Holland to the James Beard Awards Committee, governing body of the James Beard Awards. Holland is chef/owner of Brown Sugar Kitchen in Oakland, CA, author, podcast host, and alum of the Beard Foundation’s Chefs Boot Camp for Policy and Change and Women’s Entrepreneurial Leadership Program.

Through its Open for Good campaign, the Foundation is working to help the independent restaurant industry survive the COVID-19 crisis and come back stronger, more equitable, and more resilient. The Foundation’s vision is an industry in which everyone has an equal opportunity to thrive. There is much more work to do. For information on the Foundation’s Open for Good campaign, please visit jamesbeard.org/openforgood.

Updates regarding the Awards will be posted regularly to jamesbeard.org/awards and on the Foundation’s social channels (@beardfoundation on Twitter and Instagram using the hashtag #jbfa).

The 2020 James Beard Awards are presented by Capital One, the official credit card and banking partner of the James Beard Foundation. Through this first-of-its-kind partnership, Capital One cardholders enjoy exclusive access

to James Beard Foundation programming. The James Beard Awards are proudly hosted by Choose Chicago and the Illinois Restaurant Association and presented in association with Chicago O'Hare and Midway International Airports, as well as the following partners: Premier Sponsors: All-Clad Metalcrafters, American Airlines, the official airline of the James Beard Foundation, Lavazza, S.Pellegrino® Sparkling Natural Mineral Water; Supporting Sponsors: National Restaurant Association®, Skuna Bay Salmon, Tabasco® Sauce, Valrhona, White Claw® Hard Seltzer, Windstar Cruises, the official cruise line of the James Beard Foundation; Gala Reception Sponsors: Ecolab, Front of the House®, Kendall College, with additional support from VerTerra Dinnerware. Intersport is the Official Broadcast Partner of the 2020 James Beard Awards.

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 chefs and other leaders making America's food culture more delicious, diverse, and sustainable for everyone. The first James Beard Awards were given in 1991. The James Beard Awards are governed by the volunteer Awards Committee. Each Awards program (Restaurants and Chefs, Books, Journalism, Design, Broadcast Media, and Leadership) has its own subcommittee made up of industry professionals who volunteer their time to oversee the policies, procedures, and selection of judges for their respective Awards programs.

About the James Beard Foundation

The James Beard Foundation promotes *good food for good*™. For more than 30 years, the James Beard Foundation has highlighted the centrality of food culture in our daily lives. Through the [James Beard Awards](#), [unique dining experiences](#) at the James Beard House and around the country, [scholarships](#), hands-on learning, and a variety of [industry programs](#) that educate and empower leaders in our community, the Foundation has built a platform for chefs and asserted the power of gastronomy to drive behavior, culture, and policy change around food. To that end, the Foundation has also created signature impact-oriented initiatives that include our [Women's Leadership Programs](#) aimed at addressing the gender imbalance in the culinary industry; advocacy training through our [Chefs Boot Camp for Policy and Change](#); and the [James Beard Foundation Leadership Awards](#) that shine a spotlight on successful change makers. The organization is committed to giving chefs and their colleagues a voice and the tools they need to make the world more sustainable, equitable, and delicious for everyone. For more information, subscribe to the digital newsletter [Beard Bites](#) and follow @beardfoundation on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

The James Beard Foundation is a national not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization based in New York City.

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