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JAMES BEARD FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES CHANGES TO REGIONAL RESTAURANT & CHEF AWARDS FOR 2020

NEW YORK, NY (September 17, 2019) – Today the James Beard Foundation announced changes to the regional categories of its annual Restaurant & Chef Awards — considered the most prestigious culinary honors in the country. The regional Best Chef awards, which previously consisted of 10 distinct geographic areas, will expand to 12, and certain states will be reconfigured into new regions to recognize changing population data, restaurant demographics, and culinary trends. These changes will go into effect in advance of the October 1, 2019, open recommendation period for the 2020 Awards.

Every few years the Foundation, along with its Restaurant and Chef Awards subcommittee, contracts with outside demographic consultants to analyze census data and the shifting restaurant landscape to strive for balance in regional representation at the Awards. Over the past year, population statistics per state were examined against restaurant data to form the 12 regions with the goal of being as evenly distributed and culturally distinct as possible. Based on the most recent study, the following changes will be made:

- California will be removed from the “West” region and become its own regional category
- The “West” and “Northwest” categories will be partially combined into a new “Northwest & Pacific” category which will now consist of Alaska, Hawaii, Oregon, and Washington
- The remaining states from the former “Northwest” category will join Colorado in the newly minted “Mountain” category, which will consist fully of Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Utah, and Wyoming
- Texas will become its own regional category
- The Southwest, having lost Texas and Colorado to the new redistricting, will now consist of Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Nevada, the latter which joins from its previous “West” status

- “New York City,” the five boroughs which have been a standalone category since the inception of the Awards, will now be joined with the rest of New York State, formerly part of the “Northeast”, to form the “New York State” region, encompassing the city and the state in its entirety
- The remaining “Northeast” category remains the same minus New York, and now consists fully of Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont
- Categories that remain unchanged are “Great Lakes,” “Midwest,” “Mid-Atlantic,” “South,” and “Southeast”

A complete list of the newly zoned regions can be found at the bottom of this press release

“The national restaurant scene and the populations that fuel it are constantly shifting,” said James Beard Foundation Chief Strategy Officer Mitchell Davis. “We understand that as a Foundation, we must continually adapt to serve our community as fairly as possible. Our regional Best Chef categories have undergone several geographic shifts in the past to account for demographic changes found in our research and our experience with the dynamic culinary communities around the country. The last changes were implemented in 2012. By increasing our regional awards from 10 to 12 we are recognizing the explosion of food and restaurant culture across the country, and we are pleased to share this news with the food and hospitality community and all those who follow our annual Awards.”

The regional category changes affect not only those considered for the Awards themselves, but also the governing bodies that oversee the Awards process. Changes to both the subcommittee that oversees the Restaurant and Chef awards, which has seats assigned to each region, and the voting body of judges have been made accordingly. The new regions will also affect the number of America’s Classics honorees: the Foundation has historically had five honorees per year, accounting for half of the regions across the U.S. and alternating every other year. The change from 10 to 12 regions means that there will be six America’s Classics honorees annually, but the process of selection and rotating regions bi-annually will remain the same.

The Foundation invites the public to ask questions about the recent redistricting and engage with general questions about the upcoming 2020 Awards via a Reddit AMA (Ask Me Anything), set to take place with Chief Strategy Officer Mitchell Davis on Wednesday, September 18, 2019 at 12:30 pm. Find the AMA thread here [LINK](#) or via the Foundation Reddit account <https://www.reddit.com/user/beardfoundation>.

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. All James Beard Award winners receive a certificate and a medallion engraved with the James Beard Foundation Awards insignia.

2020 REGIONAL STATE BREAKDOWN
12 Regions

California

Great Lakes

- Illinois
- Indiana
- Michigan
- Ohio

Mid-Atlantic

- Delaware
- Maryland
- New Jersey
- Pennsylvania
- Virginia
- Washington D.C.

Midwest

- Iowa
- Kansas
- Minnesota
- Missouri
- North Dakota
- Nebraska
- South Dakota
- Wisconsin

Mountain

- Colorado
- Idaho
- Montana
- Utah
- Wyoming

New York State

Northeast

- Connecticut
- Massachusetts
- Maine
- New Hampshire
- Rhode Island
- Vermont

Northwest & Pacific

- Alaska
- Hawaii
- Oregon
- Washington

2019 REGIONAL STATE BREAKDOWN
10 Regions

Great Lakes

- Illinois
- Indiana
- Michigan
- Ohio

Mid-Atlantic

- Delaware
- Maryland
- New Jersey
- Pennsylvania
- Virginia
- Washington D.C.

Midwest

- Iowa
- Kansas
- Minnesota
- Missouri
- North Dakota
- Nebraska
- South Dakota
- Wisconsin

New York City

Northeast

- Connecticut
- Massachusetts
- Maine
- New Hampshire
- New York State
- Rhode Island
- Vermont

Northwest

- Alaska
- Idaho
- Montana
- Oregon
- Washington
- Wyoming

2020 REGIONAL STATE BREAKDOWN Continued

South

- Alabama
- Arkansas
- Commonwealth of Puerto Rico
- Florida
- Louisiana
- Mississippi

Southeast

- Georgia
- Kentucky
- North Carolina
- South Carolina
- Tennessee
- West Virginia

Southwest

- Arizona
- New Mexico
- Nevada
- Oklahoma

Texas

2019 REGIONAL STATE BREAKDOWN Continued

South

- Alabama
- Arkansas
- Commonwealth of Puerto Rico
- Florida
- Louisiana
- Mississippi

Southeast

- Georgia
- Kentucky
- North Carolina
- South Carolina
- Tennessee
- West Virginia

Southwest

- Arizona
- Colorado
- New Mexico
- Oklahoma
- Texas
- Utah

West

- California
- Hawaii
- Nevada

About the James Beard Foundation

The James Beard Foundation's mission is to promote *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, which 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, please visit jamesbeard.org and follow @beardfoundation on [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and [Facebook](#).