



## James Beard Foundation Kicks Off 2018 Taste America® Ten-City Culinary Series

***JBF Award Winners Traci Des Jardins, Belinda Leong, Michel Suas, and more than a dozen Taste America chefs launch cross-country culinary collaboration at the James Beard House***

New York, NY (August 2, 2018) – Tastemakers from across the country joined [James Beard Foundation](#) (JBF) CEO Clare Reichenbach last night at the James Beard House to kick off the Foundation's [2018 Taste America](#). Spanning six weeks from September 28 to November 17, the sixth annual traveling series will bring unique dining and educational programs to ten culinary destinations across the country.

Taste America Honorary All-Star and James Beard Award-winning chef and philanthropist Traci Des Jardins crafted the kickoff's menu alongside JBF Outstanding Bakers Belinda Leong and Michel Suas. Among the 2018 Taste America chefs in attendance were chefs Karen Akunowicz, Charleen Badman, David Blessing, Stuart Brioza and Nicole Kraskinski, Val Cantu, Andrew Carmellini, Abe Conlon, Nick Elmi, Michael Fojtasek, Sara Kramer and Sarah Hymanson, and Annie Pettry.

"We are beyond delighted to ring in this year's Taste America with Traci as our Honorary All-Star and celebrate alongside the dynamic cast of culinary greats that we have in attendance here tonight," said Reichenbach. "A tour de force in and out of the kitchen, Traci Des Jardins merges her culinary brilliance with civic-minded action to beget change in an industry that hungers for it. In addition to serving on the Foundation's Women's Leadership Program Advisory Board, she acts as culinary advisor to Impossible Foods – creator of the Impossible™ Burger – and sits on the board of her local non-profit La Cocina, which supports low income food entrepreneurs, placing a special emphasis on women and people of color."

Throughout the evening, guests mingled with the 2018 Taste America chefs and explored in more depth the sustainability and food waste initiatives highlighted by this year's Taste America program, which will directly contribute to the Foundation's [Scholarship programs](#). Special activations at the kickoff included a raffle by Dinova and sampling stations from Woodford Reserve, El Tesoro, Robert Mondavi, Gloria Ferrer, and Ornuva Foods North America.

"I am honored to be a part of the James Beard Foundation's Taste America again this year. It is such a wonderful lineup of talented chefs and I love that they have the opportunity to bring their cuisines to different markets all around the country," said 2018 Taste America Honorary All-Star Traci Des Jardins. "The James Beard Foundation's commitment to sustainability and food waste initiatives so closely aligns with my own beliefs. I am excited to partner with Feeding America to ensure that we provide food for those in need and that little goes to waste."

## For Immediate Release

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The lineup of **JBF's 2018 Taste America** chefs and cities are:

- September 28-29:
  - New Orleans: Visiting All-Star **Emily Luchetti\***
  - Phoenix: Visiting All-Star **Maneet Chauhan**; Local All-Star **Charleen Badman\*\*\***
- October 12-13:
  - Los Angeles: Visiting All-Star **Andrew Carmellini\***; Local All-Star **Ludo Lefebvre\*\***
- October 19-20:
  - Louisville, KY: Visiting All-Star **Steven Satterfield\***; Local All-Star **Annie Pettry**
  - Seattle: Visiting All-Stars **Stuart Brioza\*** & **Nicole Krasinski\***; Local All-Star **Edouardo Jordan\***
- October 26-27:
  - Chicago: Visiting All-Star **Karen Akunowicz\***; Local All-Star **Sarah Grueneberg\***
  - San Francisco: Visiting All-Star **Abe Conlon\***; Local All-Star **Val Cantu**
- November 2-3:
  - Boston: Visiting All-Star **Renee Erickson\***; Local All-Star **Tony Maws\***
  - Philadelphia: Visiting All-Star **Jeremiah Langhorne\***; Local All-Star **Nick Elmi\*\*\***
- November 16-17:
  - Austin: Visiting All-Star **Sara Kramer\*\*\*** & **Sarah Hymanson\*\*\***; Local All-Star **Michael Fojtasek**

New Orleans is celebrating its tricentennial in 2018 and so its dinner will take on a different format with four simultaneous Taste America dinners occurring in iconic restaurants, all on the same night, as the culinary program launches on Friday, September 28. Taste America Visiting All-Star and JBF Board Chair Emeritus Emily Luchetti will create a universal dessert to cap off each dinner.

New in 2018, Taste America is joining forces with Feeding America® to reduce food waste and donate otherwise viable food and meals leftover from the weekends' events to those in need. Logistics will be coordinated with local food waste organizations in each of the ten Taste America cities.

The James Beard Foundation's 2018 Taste America is made possible by the generosity of our sponsors and partners, including premier sponsors Deloitte, El Tesoro™ Tequila, and Woodford Reserve; supporting sponsors Dinova, Gloria Ferrer, Ornuva Foods North America, Robert Mondavi Winery, and Windstar Cruises; patron sponsor Choose Chicago; retail partner Sur La Table; and founding partner Bowen & Company. Additional support for Taste America 2018 has been provided by Chefwear and VerTerra Dinnerware.

Details of the ten cities participating in JBF's 2018 Taste America – including information on the benefit dinners, and Sur La Table free demos showcasing recipes from JBF's new cookbook *Waste Not: How to Get the Most from Your Food* – can be found at:

[jamesbeard.org/tasteamerica](http://jamesbeard.org/tasteamerica). An infographic on JBF's 2018 Taste America can be downloaded [here](#) (abridged version [here](#)).

*\*Notes James Beard Award Winner*

*\*\*Notes James Beard Award Nominee*

*\*\*\*Notes James Beard Award Semifinalist*

## About the James Beard Foundation

The James Beard Foundation's mission is to celebrate, nurture, and honor chefs and other leaders making America's food culture more delicious, diverse, and sustainable for everyone. For more than 30 years the Foundation has accomplished this mission through programs that highlight food's central role in our lives. In addition to hosting guest-chef dinners throughout the year at the historic James Beard House in New York City, the Foundation administers the James Beard Awards; grants scholarships for culinary students; produces national events that include Taste America; and creates educational programs for the culinary community and food lovers. The Foundation addresses the growing challenges facing our food system through its Impact Programs, which include the Leadership Awards; Chefs Boot Camp for Policy and Change; Issue Summits; and Culinary Labs. Industry issues, such as gender imbalance and diversity in culinary leadership, are addressed through our Industry Programs. For more information, please visit [jamesbeard.org](http://jamesbeard.org) and follow @beardfoundation on [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and [Facebook](#).