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2016 **James Beard Awards**

Press Contacts:

Mary Blanton Ogushwitz / Amy Stein

MAGRINO

Tel: 212.957.3005

Email: mary.blanton@smapr.com / amy.stein@smapr.com

[Media Dropbox](#)

JAMES BEARD FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES INAUGURAL “DESIGN ICON RESTAURANT AWARD” TO BE PRESENTED TO THE FOUR SEASONS RESTAURANT

New York, NY (March 2, 2016) – The James Beard Foundation announced today the creation of the “Design Icon Restaurant Award” and its inaugural recipient: The Four Seasons Restaurant in New York City. The Foundation has established this award in order to recognize restaurants in the United States that serve as national standard bearers of outstanding design and design innovation. In order to qualify, a restaurant’s design must have remained unchanged for at least 20 years and must have influenced and inspired the design of subsequent restaurants. Additionally, the restaurant must still be in operation. The Four Seasons will be honored at the 26th annual James Beard Foundation Awards Gala, taking place on Monday, May 2, 2016, at Lyric Opera of Chicago.

“It is an honor to award The Four Seasons Restaurant the first ever James Beard Foundation Design Icon Award,” said James Biber, chair of the Restaurant Design Awards Committee. “In introducing generations of diners to modern elegance and luxury, The Four Seasons forever changed restaurant design, even as it remained virtually unchanged itself.”

Designed by Philip Johnson and building architect Mies van der Rohe for their client, muse, and design director Phyllis Bronfman Lambert, the luxury, modernity, and cost of The Four Seasons space was unprecedented when it opened in 1959. Ada Louise and L. Garth Huxtable designed flatware, serving ware, and glassware. Mies van der Rohe designed the furniture. Today the Museum of Modern Art features more than 100 of the restaurant’s elements in their permanent design collection. The restaurant has continuously exhibited rotating galleries of modern art, including a Picasso stage curtain from a 1919 French production of the ballet *Le Tricorne*, as well as works by Andy Warhol, Frank Stella, Jackson Pollock, Helen Frankenthaler, Robert Rauchenberg, and Joán Miró.

Restaurant Associates, under the direction of Joe Baum, conceived the restaurant, while James Beard consulted on the menu with former *New York Times* restaurant critic Mimi Sheraton. Not only has The Four Seasons endured for more than 50 years, but its design and prominence have remained intact as well. The restaurant is credited with validating the concept of an American modern luxury restaurant, clearing a path for all those that followed. The current owners, Julian Niccolini and Alex von Bidder, have shepherded the restaurant through the last two decades, raising its

profile beyond its original status. The award will be accepted by the current owners and bestowed upon the restaurant remaining there as its operation changes over the next year.

“We are deeply humbled to be the recipients of this award and grateful to have spent so many years in such a beautiful restaurant,” said Niccolini and von Bidder. “James Beard was one of The Four Seasons’ greatest champions when it opened back in 1959, and we’re honored to see that come full circle by accepting this great honor in his name.”

On **Tuesday, March 15, 2016**, the Foundation will announce the final nominees for all award categories during a press conference at the Presidio Officers’ Club in San Francisco, California. Nominations will also be announced live via the Foundation’s Twitter feed at twitter.com/beardfoundation.

On **Tuesday, April 26, 2016**, the **James Beard Foundation Book, Broadcast & Journalism 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.

The **James Beard Awards Gala** will take place at Lyric Opera of Chicago on **Monday, May 2, 2016**. During the event, which is open to the public, awards in the Restaurant and Chef and Restaurant Design categories will be handed out, along with special achievement awards, including Humanitarian of the Year, Lifetime Achievement, 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 further the Foundation’s mission to celebrate, nurture, and honor America’s diverse culinary heritage through programs that educate and inspire. 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 2016 James Beard Awards are presented in association with HMSHost, Lexus, and Mariano’s; and the following partners: Premier Sponsors: All-Clad Metalcrafters, American Airlines, Lenox Tableware and Gifts, True Refrigeration®; Supporting Sponsors: Acqua Panna® Natural Spring Water, Breville, Goose Island Beer Company, Lavazza, S.Pellegrino® Sparkling Natural Mineral Water, Skuna Bay Salmon, Valrhona; Gala Reception Sponsors: Braveheart Black Angus Beef® from PERFORMANCE Foodservice, Ecolab, Groupon, Royal Caribbean International, Waldorf Astoria Hotels & Resorts; with additional support from: Chefwear, VerTerra Dinnerware, and Wisconsin Cheese. The James Beard Foundation also gratefully acknowledges the generous support of the Chicago Department of Aviation, Choose Chicago, and the Illinois Restaurant Association.

About The James Beard Foundation

Founded in 1986, the James Beard Foundation celebrates, nurtures, and honors America’s diverse culinary heritage through programs that educate and inspire. 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, please visit jamesbeard.org. Get food news, recipes, and more at the James Beard Foundation's [blog](#). Follow the James Beard Foundation on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

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