



## **James Beard Awards Set Path for a More Equitable and Transparent Program that Recognizes the Independent Restaurant and Food Media Industries**

*Critical updates to the James Beard Awards include a new mission, establishment of a code of ethics, voting protocols, updates to judging criteria and new categories*

**NEW YORK, NY (September 13, 2021)** – Today the James Beard Foundation announces changes to its Awards centered around the organization’s mission to celebrate, support, and elevate the people behind America’s food culture. These changes go into effect in October for the launch of the 2022 call for entry period.

For more than 30 years, the annual James Beard Awards have provided national acclaim and recognition of restaurants, food and beverage professionals, authors, journalists, broadcast media, and others in the food ecosystem.

As an industry leader, the Foundation is rightly held to a higher standard. In 2020, as the country was forced to reckon with a pandemic that laid bare existing racial injustice and inequities, the organization heard calls from the restaurant community and the public for a more inclusive and transparent Awards process. The Foundation recognized its responsibility and the role of the Awards to support the changing industry and embarked on a series of comprehensive changes. That August, the James Beard Awards announced an audit of policies and procedures, which was conducted by various stakeholders, including subcommittee members, the Awards committee, James Beard Foundation staff, and consulting firms specializing in equity, justice, sustainability, and awards protocols and processes.

“We know that seismic changes continue to take place within the food and media industries. The James Beard Foundation’s programs exist to serve and bolster people at different points in their careers. The Awards are one of these programs.” said Dawn Padmore, VP of Awards. “These initial changes give us an opportunity to honor, recognize, and celebrate the rich diversity of the industry. ”

“As chair of the Awards committee, I welcome this audit and the opportunity to strengthen our processes and expand our reach,” adds Tanya Holland, who, in addition to serving as chair of the James Beard Awards Committee, also serves on the Foundation’s Board of Trustees. “But I also know the work does not end here. As with all meaningful and substantial changes, there will be challenges along the way and we may not always get it right, but I know I speak for all my fellow Awards committee members when I say we are committed to an Awards process rooted in transparency and inclusion.”

Key highlights of updates and changes resulting from the audit include:

**To ensure values alignment within organization and among stakeholders:**

- **Revised, value-centered mission statement and definition of a James Beard Award winner**
  - **The James Beard Awards mission** is to recognize exceptional talent and achievement in the culinary arts, hospitality, media, and broader food system; as well as a demonstrated commitment to racial and gender equity, community, environmental sustainability, and a culture where all can thrive.
  - **Who is a James Beard Award winner?** An award recipient is both innovative and consistent, through storytelling on a plate; in food media; and in the broader food system. They champion a culture of good food anchored in talent, make efforts to promote racial and gender equity, sustainability, and a work culture where all can thrive — what we call Good Food for Good™.
- **Updated Entry Eligibility & Criteria:** All Awards entrants and recommended entrants must describe how they or their work is aligned with one or more of the Awards mission and the Foundation’s values – centered around creating a more equitable, sustainable, and healthy work culture.

**To ensure diversity and new perspectives among James Beard Awards voting body:**

- **Reduced Term Limits:** Awards committee and subcommittee term limits will decrease from three (3) three-year terms to two (2) two-year terms. Functions of Subcommittees can be [viewed here](#).
- **Annual DEI Training** will be required and provided for judges and committee members.
- **Expansion of Subcommittee & Judge Criteria for Restaurant & Chef Awards:** The criteria for who can become an Awards judge or committee member has expanded to include experts outside of food media.
- **Previous Restaurant & Chef Award winners no longer default to the voting pool.** Winners from the last three years will be considered as potential judges only, requiring the subcommittee to vote them on as active members of the voting body for that year.

**To increase access and foster a more inclusive process:**

- **Entry fees and scholarships:** Media Awards (Book, Broadcast, and Journalism) entry fees will decrease from \$150 to \$75 per entry. The Foundation will also provide a grant within the first two-week time frame of open entry for those who state their inability to cover the entry fee.
- Restaurant and Chef and Leadership award categories will continue to have no fees for entry.

**To ensure accountability:**

- **Code of Ethics:** The Foundation has established a Code of Ethics as a guideline for all entrants, semifinalists and nominees, as well as its voting body.
- **Ethics Committee:** An independent volunteer ethics committee is being formed to address any potential allegations against potential award winners. The committee will report to the Foundation’s Board of Trustees’ Governance Committee.

“The annual James Beard Awards are our most powerful lever of change and we’re committed to making them a force for good for the community they serve,” says Clare Reichenbach, CEO, James Beard Foundation. “The changes arising from the audit are designed to ensure that our mission and values inform every element of the Awards, that we’re doing all we can to level the playing field to help create a more equitable, more inclusive industry. This is a process of continuous evolution, learning and refinement. The Awards form part of the Foundation’s overall offering to support an industry where all can thrive, including our Investment Fund for Black & Indigenous Americans, Beard House Fellows

program, Women’s Leadership Programs, Legacy Network, and Open for Good, among other impactful programs.”

### **New or Updated Awards Categories**

In addition to the above changes, the Foundation has made updates to the Awards categories, which reflect current movement in the media and culinary industries with an eye toward a more equitable future. For example, in recognition that success can be achieved at any age, the age restriction has been removed from the Rising Star Chef award, and it has been renamed Emerging Chef.

The complete list of changes is posted on the James Beard Foundation [website](#).

### **Upcoming Events:**

The 2021 awards celebration event, James Beard Awards: Stories of Resilience and Leadership, will be a salute to the independent restaurant community, showcasing some of the organizations, leaders, and businesses that have made a significant impact in the industry and their communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Details about this event, which will feature virtual and in-person elements, can be accessed [here](#).

The Restaurant and Chef awards ceremony will take place on June 13, 2022, in Chicago. Dates and details for the Leadership and Media ceremonies to be announced.

News about the Awards will be regularly updated and posted to [jamesbeard.org/awards](https://jamesbeard.org/awards) and on the Foundation’s social channels (@beardfoundation on Twitter and Instagram using the hashtag #jbf).

### **About the James Beard Foundation**

The James Beard Foundation celebrates and supports the people behind America’s food culture, while pushing for new standards in the restaurant industry to create a future where all have the opportunity to thrive. Established over 30 years ago, the Foundation has highlighted the centrality of food culture in our daily lives and is committed to supporting a resilient and flourishing industry that honors its diverse communities. By amplifying new voices, celebrating those leading the way, and supporting those on the path to do so, the Foundation is working to create a more equitable and sustainable future — what we call Good Food for Good™. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the James Beard Foundation launched the Open for Good campaign to ensure that independent restaurants not only survive, but that the industry is able to rebuild stronger than before. For more information, subscribe to the digital newsletter [Beard Bites](#) and follow @beardfoundation on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [TikTok](#), and [Clubhouse](#). The James Beard Foundation is a national not-for-profit 501c(3) organization based in New York City.

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### **Media Contact**

Magrino PR

[JamesBeard@magrinopr.com](mailto:JamesBeard@magrinopr.com)