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MEDIA CONTACT:

Martha Davenport
VBRA Executive Director
757-567-9304
director@dineinva.com



Virginia Beach Restaurant Association Launches “Beard at the Beach Culinary Series”

Community-wide events expand Coastal Virginia’s first official Friends of James Beard Benefit® while raising funds for the James Beard Foundation

VIRGINIA BEACH, VA – July 30, 2026— TThe Virginia Beach Restaurant Association (VBRA), in partnership with Virginia Eats + Drinks, and with the support of the Virginia Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau as a presenting sponsor, is proud to announce the launch of the Beard at the Beach Culinary Series, a collection of chef-driven dining experiences, tastings, and special events taking place throughout Coastal Virginia in the weeks leading up to the inaugural Beard at the Beach: A Coastal Virginia Celebration of James Beard on September 21, 2026. As an official extension of the Friends of James Beard Benefit®, the Culinary Series provides residents and visitors with additional opportunities to experience the region’s exceptional culinary talent while supporting the mission of the James Beard Foundation. A portion of the proceeds from each official Culinary Series event will benefit the Foundation’s work in developing the future of American food through education, scholarships, sustainability initiatives, and industry leadership.

“One evening simply isn’t enough to showcase the incredible talent found throughout Coastal Virginia,” said Martha Davenport, Executive Director of the Virginia Beach Restaurant Association. “The Beard at the Beach Culinary Series allows more chefs, restaurants, beverage partners, and culinary businesses to participate in this historic celebration while giving the public more opportunities to experience our region’s remarkable food culture and support the James Beard Foundation.”

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Patrick Evans-Hylton, publisher of Virginia Eats + Drinks and host of the signature Beard at the Beach dinner, said the Culinary Series reflects the organization's mission of celebrating Virginia's rich culinary heritage and the people behind it.

"Virginia Eats + Drinks was created to tell the stories of Virginia's chefs, restaurants, farmers, watermen, beverage producers, and artisans who make our Commonwealth such an exceptional culinary destination," said Evans-Hylton. "The Beard at the Beach Culinary Series expands that storytelling beyond a single evening, inviting residents and visitors to experience the incredible diversity of Coastal Virginia cuisine. We are honored to partner with the Virginia Beach Restaurant Association on this landmark Friends of James Beard Benefit® and help shine a national spotlight on the extraordinary talent found throughout our region."

The Culinary Series transforms Beard at the Beach from a one-night fundraising dinner into a regional culinary celebration, inviting guests to explore the flavors, creativity, and hospitality that define Coastal Virginia.

Event highlights include:

- Exclusive chef collaboration dinners
- Special wine tasting celebrating the Pacific Northwest wines that influenced James Beard's culinary roots.
- Cocktail experiences showcasing local distilleries and mixologists
- Specialty prix-fixe menus available for a limited time
- Oyster roasts and seafood celebrations highlighting the Chesapeake Bay
- Artisan baking, pastry, and dessert experiences
- Unique food and beverage pairings
- Chef demonstrations and other exclusive culinary experiences

Each participating event is developed by local restaurants and culinary partners to showcase their unique interpretation of Coastal Virginia cuisine while contributing to the overall fundraising effort.

The Culinary Series culminates with Beard at the Beach: A Coastal Virginia Celebration of James Beard on Monday, September 21, 2026, at Zoës Steak + Seafood. Hosted by Patrick Evans-Hylton, the evening will feature an all-star lineup of acclaimed chefs from across Coastal Virginia preparing a multi-course menu inspired by the region's ingredients, traditions, and culinary heritage. Tickets will go on sale August 2026.

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Beyond celebrating culinary excellence, Beard at the Beach is expected to generate meaningful economic impact by attracting culinary travelers, increasing overnight visitation, and encouraging guests to explore multiple restaurants and hospitality businesses throughout Coastal Virginia. Together, the Culinary Series and signature dinner position the region on the national culinary stage while supporting one of America's most respected culinary organizations.

The complete Beard at the Beach Culinary Series schedule, participating businesses, ticket information, and sponsorship opportunities are available at: www.dineinva.com/beard-at-the-beach/culinary-series/

Restaurants, breweries, wineries, distilleries, and specialty food businesses interested in hosting an official Culinary Series event, or businesses wishing to donate an item or experience for the Beard at the Beach silent auction, are encouraged to contact the Virginia Beach Restaurant Association.

Event Details

Beard at the Beach- A Coastal Celebration of James Beard

Monday, September 21, 2026, 6:00 pm

Zoës Steak + Seafood

Virginia Beach, Virginia

Tickets go on sale August 2026

Presented by the Virginia Beach Restaurant Association and Virginia Eats + Drinks, with sponsorship support from the Virginia Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau, in partnership with the James Beard Foundation.

ABOUT THE VIRGINIA BEACH RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION

The Virginia Beach Restaurant Association (VBRA) is the only dedicated restaurant business association in Hampton Roads, representing over 130 local restaurants.

VBRA advocates for policies that support a vibrant, sustainable hospitality industry while promoting Virginia Beach as a premier culinary destination.

www.dineinva.com

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