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Virginia Beach Restaurant Association Unveils All-Star Talent Lineup for Beard at the Beach

First-Ever James Beard Foundation Fundraising Dinner in Virginia Beach Showcases the Region's Premier Culinary Talent

VIRGINIA BEACH, VA – August 10The Virginia Beach Restaurant Association (VBRA) and Virginia Eats+Drinks are proud to announce the acclaimed chef lineup for Beard at the Beach, an extraordinary James Beard Foundation fundraising dinner taking place Monday, September 21, 2026, at Zoës Steak + Seafood in Virginia Beach.

Bringing together some of Coastal Virginia's most celebrated chefs and culinary professionals for one unforgettable evening, Beard at the Beach will celebrate the region's culinary excellence while supporting the mission of the James Beard Foundation to champion a more sustainable, equitable, and thriving independent restaurant industry.

Guests will enjoy an exclusive multi-course tasting experience, with each course prepared by a different chef, highlighting the creativity, craftsmanship, and locally inspired cuisine that has made Coastal Virginia one of the Mid-Atlantic's premier culinary destinations.

Meet the Talent:

Your Host

Patrick Evans-Hylton

Patrick is a Johnson & Wales-trained chef, award-winning food journalist, food historian, author,

and publisher of Virginia Eats + Drinks. For more than three decades, Patrick has chronicled Virginia's food and foodways through print, television, radio, books, and culinary education. His work is deeply rooted in telling the stories of the people, ingredients, history, and traditions that have shaped Virginia cuisine. Website: VA Eats +Drinks

Your Sommelier

Marc Sauter

Marc is the sommelier and proprietor of Zoës Steak + Seafood in Virginia Beach and has spent more than 27 years in the restaurant industry sharing his passion and knowledge of food and wine. His wine education has taken him around the world—from France, Italy and Spain to Australia, New Zealand, Oregon and Napa Valley—and he has advanced through the Court of Master Sommeliers. Today, he is recognized throughout Coastal Virginia for his expertise, wine education, and ability to create memorable pairings and dining experiences. Website: Zoës Steak and Seafood

Pass Arounds

Chef Kenny Sloane

Executive Chef, FIN Seafood, Newport News

Known for his refined coastal cuisine and dedication to fresh, locally sourced seafood, Chef Kenny Sloane has built a reputation as one of Coastal Virginia's most innovative culinary leaders. His restaurants celebrate seasonal ingredients while blending classic technique with contemporary presentation. Website: FIN Seafood

Pass Arounds

Chef Julianne ("Juli") Gutierrez

Executive Chef, Williamsburg Inn at Colonial Williamsburg

Chef Gutierrez leads the culinary program for the Williamsburg Inn, emphasizing seasonal Virginia ingredients while combining classical training with creative modern techniques. A graduate of Colonial Williamsburg's prestigious culinary apprenticeship, she has become one of the Commonwealth's rising culinary stars. Website: Williamsburg Inn

Soup

Chef John Mannino

Mannino's Italian Bistro, Virginia Beach

For decades, Chef Mannino has delighted guests with authentic Italian cuisine rooted in family traditions, handmade recipes, and warm hospitality. Website: Mannino's Italian Bistro

Palate Cleanser

Chef Stella Pomianek

Cafe Stella, Norfolk

Chef Pomianek is known for her creative, seasonal approach to contemporary cuisine and beautifully balanced flavors that celebrate fresh ingredients. Website: Cafe Stella

Fish Course

Chef Paul Benton

Zoës Steak + Seafood, Virginia Beach

As Executive Chef of Zoës Steak + Seafood, Chef Benton has earned recognition for his sophisticated seafood preparations and elevated coastal cuisine while showcasing the best ingredients from Virginia's waters. Website: Zoës Steak + Seafood

Intermezzo

Chef Stella Pomianek

Cafe Stella, Norfolk

Returning to present an elegant palate cleanser before the evening's entrée.

Meat Course

Chef Tony Caruana

Luce and Luce Secondo Norfolk & Chesapeake

Chef Caruana has become one of Hampton Roads' most respected Italian chefs, combining traditional Italian techniques with locally inspired ingredients to create memorable dining experiences. Website: Luce

Salad Course

Chef Harper Bradshaw

Harper's Table, Suffolk

Chef Bradshaw is celebrated for his farm-driven philosophy and modern Southern cuisine that highlights regional farms, producers, and seasonal flavors. Website: [Harper's Table](#)

Dessert & Mignardise

Chef Chad Martin

Circa 1918 Kitchen + Bar, Newport News

Chef Martin closes the evening with an unforgettable dessert presentation, showcasing the creativity and craftsmanship that have made Circa 1918 one of Hampton Roads' premier dining destinations. Website: [Circa 1918 Kitchen + Bar](#)

A Celebration of Coastal Virginia

"This evening represents more than an exceptional dinner—it is a celebration of the incredible culinary talent that exists throughout Coastal Virginia," said Martha Davenport, Executive Director of the Virginia Beach Restaurant Association. "We are honored to partner with the James Beard Foundation and bring together chefs from across our region for an unforgettable experience while supporting the future of independent restaurants."

The chef collaboration spans Virginia Beach, Norfolk, Chesapeake, Suffolk, Newport News, and Williamsburg, demonstrating the strength of the region's culinary community and its growing national reputation.

With seating limited to just 55 guests, Beard at the Beach promises an intimate evening featuring extraordinary cuisine, exceptional hospitality, and an opportunity to support one of the restaurant industry's most respected organizations.

Tickets

Tickets will go on sale soon.

Follow @DineInVB on social media and visit www.dineinvb.com for ticket announcements and event updates. Seating is extremely limited and tickets are expected to sell quickly.

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

Beard at the Beach is presented by the Virginia Beach Restaurant Association (VBRA) and Virginia Eats + Drinks, with presenting sponsorship from the Virginia Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau, benefiting 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.

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