

2025 JAMES BEARD AWARDS



JAMES BEARD FOUNDATION® CELEBRATES INAUGURAL IMPACT AWARD HONOREES

NEW YORK (JUNE 15, 2025) – The James Beard Foundation® recognized and celebrated the inaugural honorees of the 2025 James Beard Impact Awards presented by Capital One at a ceremony and luncheon at The Dalcy in Chicago on Sunday, June 15, 2025. Hosted by author, producer, and *Top Chef* judge Gail Simmons, the event recognized five changemakers from across the country actively working to push for standards that create a more equitable, sustainable, and economically viable restaurant industry and food system for producers, workers, and consumers alike.

“Congratulations to our 2025 Impact Awards honorees,” said **Clare Reichenbach, CEO, James Beard Foundation**. *“We’re honored to celebrate these transformative leaders who embody the very best of our Good Food for Good® mission. From supporting farmers and formerly incarcerated individuals to preserving Native lands and connecting communities, they are reshaping how we think about food systems and building a better future for all.”*

The Impact Awards is a new program in 2025, born out of the James Beard Foundation’s impact work and advocacy policy priorities. Built on the previous Leadership Awards that were retired in 2024, the Impact Awards are administered by the Impact Committee of the Foundation’s Board of Trustees and reflect the year’s programmatic priorities. It is one of the Foundation’s three Achievement Awards programs, alongside the Lifetime Achievement and Humanitarian of the Year Awards.

“This year’s Impact Award honorees demonstrate the visionary leadership and creativity required to tackle our industry and broader food system’s most urgent challenges,” said **Mary Sue Milliken, Impact Awards Chair and Board of Trustees Vice Chair**. *“We are deeply grateful for their commitment and proud to honor and elevate their vital work.”*

The 2025 Impact Award honorees are:

- **Angie Craig, U.S. Representative (MN-2); Ranking Member, House Committee on Agriculture:** Born into a family rooted in farming, Congresswoman Angie Craig believes farmers are essential to the economy and sustainable communities. As both the Ranking Member of the House Committee on Agriculture and representative for Minnesota’s second district, supporting agricultural communities is a top priority for Craig and her work has included ensuring that all parts of the farm bill are implemented effectively. She led efforts in the House to pass the Lower Food and Fuel Costs Act, legislation that tapped the power of family farmers to lower costs for Americans. This legislation included two of her bills: the Strengthening the Agriculture and Food Supply Chain Act, which would create a task force dedicated to shoring up the agriculture and food supply chains, and the Year-Round Fuel Choice Act, which would allow for the year-round sale of E15, a cheaper biofuel alternative.
- **Brandon Edwin Chrostowski, CEO, EDWINS Leadership & Restaurant Institute:** As a changemaking, classically trained chef and founder, president, and CEO of EDWINS Leadership & Restaurant Institute, Brandon Chrostowski has revolutionized culinary and hospitality training within (and beyond) prisons by providing formerly incarcerated men and women—many from marginalized communities—with a second chance to rebuild their lives. Chrostowski offers equal opportunities regardless of past mistakes, and his mission fosters inclusiveness and hope for

individuals who have often been overlooked by society. Based in Cleveland, Ohio, Chrostowski's work has also had a profound impact on advancing equity both locally and globally, and the EDWINS curriculum is now available on tablets in prisons across the country—ensuring that even those incarcerated have access to education and career opportunities.

- **Anthony Edwards Jr., CEO and Co-Founder, EatOkra Entrepreneur:** Anthony Edwards Jr.'s penchant for leadership blossomed at an early age when he joined the U.S. Army as an avionics systems repairer after high school, rising through the ranks to lead a team of 25 soldiers. After receiving an honorable discharge, Edwards pursued a degree in computer science at Fordham University, where he honed his coding skills to later become a fullstack developer. Coding expertise proved useful when he later co-founded EatOkra alongside his wife, Janique Edwards—the award-winning, tech-backed platform connecting over 600,000 food lovers directly to Black-owned restaurants, caterers, and food trucks. Since launching in 2016, EatOkra has evolved into a multifaceted community platform powered by a small but mighty team that champions the Black culinary ecosystem through programming, funding, business resources, and powerful storytelling.
- **Seanicaa Edwards Herron, Founder and Executive Director, Freedmen Heirs Foundation:** A respected agricultural economist, Seanicaa Edwards Herron has two decades of experience spanning academic, private, and government sectors—and was the first Black woman to serve as an agricultural economist for the USDA World Agricultural Outlook Board. Recognizing the unique challenges faced by Black farmers, Herron now serves as the founder and executive director of Freedmen Heirs Foundation, a nonprofit organization transforming U.S. agriculture by bridging the gap between Black farmers and the marketplace. Herron has shown a commitment to mobilizing resources to facilitate access to opportunity for Black farmers who continue to be systematically marginalized and displaced from their land. In addition to JBF's recognition of her leadership in racial equity, Herron is also a fellow at Aspen Institute's Food & Society's Food Leaders Fellowship program.
- **Dune Lankard, President and Founder, Native Conservancy:** Ancestrally from and a lifelong resident of Eyak, Alaska, Dune Lankard is an Eyak Athabaskan Native of the Eagle Clan—and a strategic force for several nonprofits. Lankard's life changed when he found his homelands covered with oil from the Exxon Valdez disaster, and he swiftly went from being a commercial fisherman to a dedicated community activist. In Lankard's view, not only were the trees and wild salmon endangered, so were the Native cultures that depended on them. He has since helped preserve one million acres of wild salmon habitat along the Gulf of Alaska coastline and is now building regenerative economies through ocean crops of kelp. In his continued leadership linking culture with environmental solutions, Lankard is the president and founder of Native Conservancy, a nonprofit empowering Alaska Native peoples to preserve their ancestral lands and ocean. He has won numerous awards for his life's chosen work as a social change artist.

Recommendations come from an Impact Awards Advisory Council comprising experts in the food system space and sectors adjacent to the restaurant industry, and from a public open call. Honorees are then chosen by the JBF Board's Impact Committee; this year's honorees were first announced on April 2, 2025. Information on the Impact Awards can be found [here](#), with eligibility criteria available [here](#).

The James Beard Awards, considered to be among the nation's most prestigious honors, recognize exceptional talent in the culinary and food media industries, as well as a demonstrated commitment to equity, community, sustainability, and a culture where all can thrive. James Beard Awards policies and procedures can be viewed at jamesbeard.org/awards.

The 2025 James Beard Awards® are presented by Capital One, the official credit card and banking partner of the James Beard Foundation. The James Beard Awards® are proudly hosted by Choose Chicago and the Illinois Restaurant Association, and presented in association with Chicago O'Hare and Midway International Airports, as well as with the following partners: Premier Sponsors: Acqua Panna® Natural Spring Water, American Airlines, the official airline of the James Beard Foundation, HEINZ, Hilton, HMSHost, PATRÓN Tequila, S.Pellegrino® Sparkling Natural Mineral Water; Supporting Sponsor: Skuna

Bay Salmon; Reception Sponsors: CookUnity, Kendall College at National Louis University, Windstar Cruises, the official cruise line of the James Beard Foundation; Additional Support Sponsors: Bimi® Baby Broccoli, Cargo Crew, Cristaux, Ecolab, McCormick for Chefs®, Plugrà Premium Style European Butter, Sodexo, the official campus dining partner of the James Beard Foundation, Tito's Handmade Vodka, VerTerra Dinnerware. Intersport is the official broadcast partner of the 2025 James Beard Awards®.

PRESS ASSETS

- Image selects (please credit the photographer listed in file details):
 - Photo selects will be available [at this link](#) the afternoon / evening of June 15.
- Access the lineup of cooking chefs and menus for the 2025 Awards ceremonies [here](#).
- Awards press kit: available [at this link](#).
- Awards videos: visit our [YouTube page](#) to watch Awards explainer videos, as well as past videos from the James Beard Awards.

ABOUT THE JAMES BEARD AWARDS®

The James Beard Awards® recognizes exceptional talent and achievement in the culinary arts, hospitality, media, and broader food system, as well as a demonstrated commitment to equity, community, sustainability, and a culture where all can thrive. Established in 1990, the James Beard Awards® are among the nation's most prestigious honors recognizing leaders in the culinary and food media industries and those in the broader food systems. The Awards are overseen by the Awards Committee. Each Awards program (Book, Broadcast Media, Journalism, and Restaurant and Chef) has its own subcommittee members who volunteer their time to oversee the policies, procedures, and selection of judges for their respective program. All James Beard Award winners receive a certificate and a medallion engraved with the James Beard Foundation Awards insignia. For more information, [sign up for our emails](#) or visit us at jamesbeard.org/awards. For up-to-the-minute news about the Awards, follow @beardfoundation on Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn and keep an eye out for posts using #JBFA.

ABOUT THE JAMES BEARD FOUNDATION®

The James Beard Foundation® (JBF) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit dedicated to leading chefs and the broader culinary industry towards a new standard of excellence. Our guiding principle, Good Food for Good®, informs our vision of a vibrant, equitable, and sustainable independent restaurant industry that stands as a cornerstone of American culture, community, and economy, and drives towards a better food system. For nearly 40 years, JBF has been instrumental in recognizing, amplifying, educating, and training the individuals who shape American food culture. Today, our mission comes to life through the prestigious James Beard Awards, industry and community-focused programming, advocacy and policy initiatives, and exciting culinary events and partnerships around the country—including at our new [Platform by JBF® event space](#) in New York City. Learn more at jamesbeard.org, sign up for our emails, and follow @beardfoundation on social media.

ABOUT CAPITAL ONE

At Capital One we're on a mission for our customers – bringing them best-in-class products, rewards, service, and experiences. Capital One is a diversified bank that offers products and services to individuals, small businesses and commercial clients. We use technology, innovation, and interaction to provide consumers with products and services to meet their needs. Through Capital One Dining and Capital One Entertainment, we provide our rewards cardholders with access to unforgettable experiences in the areas they're passionate about, including dining, music, sports, and the arts. Learn more at capitalone.com/dining and capitalone.com/entertainment.

Contact: MMGY Wagstaff
jbf@wagstaffmktg.com