



Bistro AIX Chef, Tom Gray, Nominated for James Beard Award

Prestigious award considered the “Oscars of the food world”

Jacksonville, Fla. (February 17, 2009) – Nominations were announced on Friday for the 2009 James Beard Foundation’s Restaurant and Chef Award Semifinalists and include local chef Tom Gray, Executive Chef and Partner of Bistro AIX in San Marco in the Best Chef: South category. Deemed “the Oscars of the food world,” by Time magazine, The James Beard Foundation Awards are the country’s most coveted honor for chefs; food and beverage professionals; broadcast media, journalists, and authors working on food; and restaurant architects and designers.

Selected from over 15,000 online entries, the prestigious group of semifinalists in the 19 Restaurant and Chef categories represents a wide variety of culinary talent, from legendary chefs and dining destinations in 10 different regions across the United States, to the nation’s best new restaurants and rising star chefs. Gray is in the running to claim the Best Chef: South award along with top chefs from Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Louisiana and Mississippi.

“It was the best type of surprise possible,” said Gray. “A guest sent us an e-mail with congratulations on the nomination, but we had not received any official notice from the James Beard Foundation, so I wasn’t sure it was real. When I actually confirmed it, my reaction was pure amazement.”

The semifinalists will be evaluated by a panel of more than 400 judges, and on Monday, March 23, 2009, five finalists will be announced in each category. “The category is filled with many accomplished, high profile chefs; just to be in their company is a true honor. I must admit, though, I’d love to make it to the short list of five, not to mention, number one!”, added Gray. Final winners will be announced on Monday, May 4, 2009 at the Awards Ceremony and Gala Reception, the highly-anticipated annual celebration taking place at Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center in New York City.

The James Beard Foundation is dedicated to celebrating, preserving, and nurturing America's culinary heritage and diversity in order to elevate the appreciation of our culinary excellence. A cookbook author and teacher with an encyclopedic knowledge about food, James Beard, who died in 1985, was a champion of American cuisine. He helped educate and mentor generations of professional chefs and food enthusiasts. Today, the Beard Foundation continues in the same spirit by administering a number of diverse programs that include educational initiatives, food industry awards, scholarships to culinary schools, and publications, and by maintaining the historic James Beard House in New York City's Greenwich Village as a performance space for visiting chefs. For more information, please visit www.jamesbeard.org.

A city-hip restaurant located in Jacksonville's historic San Marco district, Bistro AIX features a regional Mediterranean and French-inspired menu, an award-winning wine list and a full bar complemented by professional, unpretentious service. The bustling main dining room is highlighted by original 1940s brickwork, curved marble bar and an open kitchen. A second dining room, the ONYX Room, includes a glowing onyx bar, open-view wine cellar and spacious private dining rooms. Bistro AIX has been voted Best Restaurant in Jacksonville and since 2004 is a recipient of the Wine Spectator Award of Excellence. Gray and Bistro AIX have been featured in such publications as The New York Times, Southern Living, Travel & Leisure, and USA Weekend Magazine. For more information, visit www.BistroX.com.

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