

# 2023 James Beard Awards

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### JAMES BEARD FOUNDATION® CELEBRATES 2023 LEADERSHIP AWARD WINNERS

**NEW YORK (June 4, 2023)** – The James Beard Foundation® recognized and celebrated the 2023 James Beard Leadership Award winners at an invite-only ceremony and luncheon in Chicago on Sunday, June 4, 2023. The six 2023 winners were first announced on March 29. The full list of winners can be found below and on the James Beard Foundation [website](#).

The winners were honored today during a ceremony and luncheon at The Dalcy in Chicago’s Fulton Market District, hosted by **Dr. Jessica B. Harris, James Beard Award winner, Professor Emeritus, Queens College, CUNY, and author of *High on the Hog: A Culinary Journey from Africa to America, inspiration for the Netflix Original Series***. Presenters included **Erika Allen**, Urban Growers Collective and James Beard Leadership Award winner; **Irene Li**, Mei Mei Dumplings and Prepshift, James Beard Leadership Award winner and Leadership Committee chair; **Sean Sherman**, Owamni by the Sioux Chef and NATIFS.org James Beard Leadership Award winner and Leadership Committee member; **Lora Smith**, Justice Funders; **Michael W. Twitty**, culinary historian and James Beard Award-winning author; and **Kolu Zigbi**, consultant and food sovereignty advocate.

The James Beard Foundation’s Leadership Awards recognize individuals and organizations whose work is helping to create a safer, more healthful, equitable, and sustainable food world. The Awards are given for achievement in developing a global food system that is just, sustainable, and economically viable for both producers and consumers.

“There is no better representation of ‘Good Food For Good’ than those we recognize today—these remarkable leaders who work tirelessly to fight for change, break down barriers, and help us to build a healthier and more equitable food culture,” said **Clare Reichenbach, CEO of the James Beard Foundation**. “This is what we mean when we say ‘Good Food For Good.’ Congratulations to this year’s Leadership Award winners.”

“It was a privilege to consider such an incredible list of nominees for this year’s Leadership Awards. Each nominee’s work is as inspiring as it is important,” said **Irene Li, Leadership Awards Committee chair**. “Congratulations to everyone recognized this year for their outstanding work, and thank you for your incredible contributions that will continue to drive positive change for our communities and our environment.”

The voting process for all Leadership Award programs can be found [here](#), and the process, eligibility, and categories for each program can be found [here](#).

## **2023 James Beard Leadership Award Winners**

This year's Leadership Award winners are:

### **Jim Embry**

#### **Sustainable Communities Network, Slow Food USA, and Ujamaa Cooperative Farming Alliance**

Jim Embry has spent his life as a community activist, starting with his work as a civil rights activist when he was just 10 years old. In 2006, he founded the [Sustainable Communities Network](#), a Lexington, Kentucky-based nonprofit dedicated to the development of the theory and practice of sustainable living. He is on the administrative team of Ujamaa Cooperative Farming Alliance, a Black- and Indigenous-led company with a focus on African and African-American crops. He has also been active in Slow Food's Equity, Inclusion, and Justice Committee and is a seven-time USA delegate to Slow Food's Terra Madre biannual gathering in Italy.

"Because stolen land from Indigenous peoples and stolen labor of African peoples to do agriculture and food work is the foundational contradiction of injustice in our nation, this award bestowed by the James Beard Foundation is a recognition and reaffirmation that resolving this contradiction of injustice deeply embedded in food and agriculture is also the fulcrum point for the much-needed transformation of our society."

### **Valerie Horn**

#### **CANE Kitchen, Cowan Community Center, and City of Whitesburg Farmers Market**

Valerie Horn is the board chair for [Community Agricultural Nutritional Enterprises \(CANE Kitchen\)](#), which offers local farmers a permanent outlet for their produce and provides low-income individuals with access to healthy food from their community. Horn is also the director of Cowan Community Action Group and the board chair for the City of Whitesburg Farmers Market.

"I am honored to accept the James Beard Foundation Leadership Award and to bring attention to the efforts of so many in my community of Whitesburg, Kentucky," said Horn. "The weight of this recognition is a testimonial to the strength of our region that not only validates the work myself and others are doing, but broadens and deepens our network of change."

### **Savonala "Savi" Horne**

#### **Land Loss Prevention Project**

Savi Horne is the executive director of the [North Carolina Association of Black Lawyers, Land Loss Prevention Project](#), which provides legal expertise, community education, and advocacy skills to help farms and rural landowners facing legal, economic and environmental challenges. She currently serves on the boards of the National Family Farm Coalition and the Rural Coalition and is a member of the United States Department of Agriculture, Equity Commission/Agriculture Subcommittee and the National Black Environmental Justice Network. She is a recipient of the 2020 American Bar Association Section of Environment, Energy, and Resources (SEER) Award for Excellence in Environmental, Energy, and Resources Stewardship.

"I accept on behalf of my coworkers and comrades. It is the fruit of our common labor in the intersectional spaces of food justice and land rights that is being honored here today," said Horne. "This award affirms the right to access to land that is not contaminated with toxins, or in close proximity to polluted spaces that deny a community's ability to sustain itself and protect its foodways."

## **Ira Wallace**

### **Southern Exposure Seed Exchange**

Ira Wallace is a writer, gardener, an educator, and worker/owner of the cooperatively managed [Southern Exposure Seed Exchange](#) in central Virginia, which provides more than 700 varieties of high-quality, heirloom, and open-pollinated seeds. She currently serves on the board of the Virginia Association for Biological Farming. After 10 years of service, she stepped down from the Organic Seed Alliance in February. Wallace is the author of *The Timber Press Guide to Vegetable Gardening in the Southeast* and the state-specific series *Grow Great Vegetables*. She also spends a lot of her time in Acorn, the Virginia community she helped found in the 1990s, which farms more than 50 acres of certified organic land. Wallace also supports and serves as "godmother" to the new Black and Indigenous-led Ujamaa Seeds.

## **Rowen White**

### **Sierra Seeds and Indigenous Seedkeepers Network**

Rowen White is a farmer, seedkeeper, and published author. She is the founder and creative director of [Sierra Seeds](#), a living Indigenous seed bank farm in Nevada City that is centered on values-aligned cultural stewardship of land, seeds, cultural memory and dignified resurgence of a culture of belonging in our seed and foodways. She is also the founder of Indigenous Seed Keepers Network, which promotes Indigenous cultural diversity for future generations by collecting, growing, and sharing heirloom seeds and plants.

"I receive this on behalf of the grand lineage of Mohawk seed keepers and farmers who kept our precious seeds alive in the face of countless adversities so that a living descendent, like myself, could learn from these seeds and cultural teachings and, in turn, share these embodied teachings with the next generation of Indigenous farmers."

## **Emerging Leadership: The Burgerville Workers Union**

The [Burgerville Workers Union](#) is an independent collective voice of Burgerville workers, whose goal is to win better working conditions by building union power on the shop floor. The member-run union, a part of the Portland brand of the Industrial Workers of the World, successfully negotiated the country's first-ever fast-food union contract in 2021. The contract provisions included wage increases, paid vacation time, in-store tipping at all unionized locations, and an end to at-will employment. The 2021 contract applied to five of the fast-food chain's stores in the Pacific Northwest and has since inspired union action at other food service businesses across the country.

"We feel encouraged that working class people in our industry fighting for a better world are not written out of history and that their achievements spark an inspiration in other workers to demand a seat at the table for safe and healthy workplaces," said the Burgerville Workers Union. "Just a few years ago, worker power in our industry was few and today we are many. May this award go to the many more tomorrow who will join in the struggle, fight and win a better world for all working folk."

The ceremony was followed by a luncheon for 150 guests featuring a menu from **James Beard Best Chef: Great Lakes Award winner Erick Williams** (Virtue Restaurant, Chicago); **C.J. Jacobson** (Aba, Chicago and Austin; and Éma, Chicago); and **Eric Santoyo** (Aba and The Dalcy, Chicago).

The 2023 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 BentoBox, the official restaurant technology partner of the James Beard Foundation, 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, Guinness, Hilton, HMSHost, S.Pellegrino® Sparkling Mineral Water; Supporting Sponsors: HexClad Cookware, Moët & Chandon, Skuna Bay Salmon; Reception Sponsors: Don Julio Tequila, Ecolab, Kendall College at National Louis

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For more information about the James Beard Foundation Awards, visit [jamesbeard.org/awards](https://jamesbeard.org/awards). For up-to-the-minute news about the Awards follow @beardfoundation on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) and keep an eye out for posts using #jbfa.

#### **PRESS ASSETS:**

- **Image selects (please credit the photographer listed in file details):**
  - Photo selects will be available [at this link](#) the evening of June 4
- **Awards Press Kit:** [available at this link](#)

#### **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 racial and gender 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. The Awards are overseen by the Awards Committee. Each Awards program (Book, Broadcast Media, Journalism, Leadership, 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, subscribe to the [Awards digital newsletter](#).

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

The James Beard Foundation (JBF) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that 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®. JBF brings its mission to life through the annual Awards, industry and community-focused programs, advocacy, partnerships, and events across the country. For the first time in the Foundation's history, exceptional culinary talent, industry leaders, and visitors from NYC and beyond can experience unforgettable dining and educational programming at [Platform by the James Beard Foundation](#)—and be the first to try new food concepts at the Good To Go by JBF kiosk—inspiring food and beverage devotees for decades to come. Learn more at [jamesbeard.org](https://jamesbeard.org), sign up for our newsletter, and follow @beardfoundation on social media.

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