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Maryland's Brightest Stars to be Honored at Restaurant Association of Maryland's Annual Wards Gala

Online Voting Now Open!

(Columbia, MD) The Restaurant Association of Maryland (RAM) is inviting the dining public as well as hospitality professionals throughout the state to vote for this year's "Stars of the Industry". Each year RAM honors hospitality luminaries for their excellence demonstrated in and out of the kitchen as well as their service to the local communities. The awards presentation is set to take place at the annual "Stars of the Industry" Awards Gala on Monday, March 23, 2009 at Martin's West in Baltimore, MD. "The Annual Awards Gala is the one night of the year we can truly celebrate our industry, its significant impact and hospitality leaders at the top of their game. Guests experience dining at its finest, while our honorees are celebrated by the industry they so well represent" said Michael Birchenall of Foodservice Monthly and Chairman of the 2009 Gala Nominations Committee.

2009 "Stars of the Industry" Nominees by Award Category:

Allied Member of the Year *(voted on by RAM members only)*

Lankford Sysco Food Services.....Fred Lankford
Anne Arundel Community
College - HCAT.....Mary Ellen Mason
MICROS - Mid-Atlantic.....Henry Pertman
Payce.....Brian Pfeifer
US RefrigerationMark Winters

Maryland Favorite New Restaurant

Catonsville Gourmet Market
& Fine FoodsCatonsville
Mitchum's SteakhouseTrappe
Old Hickory SteakhouseNational Harbor
VOLTFrederick
Woodberry Kitchen.....Baltimore

Favorite Restaurant

Antrim 1844.....Taneytown
Black's Bar & Kitchen.....Bethesda
Marlin Moon Grille.....Ocean City
Charleston.....Baltimore
Jordan's Steakhouse.....Ellicott City

Restaurateur of the Year *(voted on by RAM members only)*

Dorothy and Richard Mollet.....Antrim 1844
Jeff and Barbara Black.....Black Restaurant Group
Leighton Moore.....Seacrets Bar & Grill
Tony Foreman
and Cindy WolfThe Charleston Group
Miguel SanzTio Pepe Restaurante

Chef of the Year

Chef Michael Gettier.....Antrim 1844
Chef Rich Regan.....Monocacy Crossing
Chef Michael Rork.....Town Dock Restaurant
Chef Bruce WetterauGranary Restaurant
& Sassafras Grill
Chef Cindy Wolf.....The Charleston Group

Favorite Bar & Tavern

Annabel Lee TavernBaltimore
Fager's IslandOcean City
Nacho Mama's.....Baltimore
Red Star Bar & GrillFells Point
The Greene Turtle Sports Bar & Grille.....Statewide

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Wine & Beverage Program of the Year

Charleston.....Baltimore
Fleming's Prime Steakhouse & Wine Bar....Baltimore
Grapeseed American Bistro & Wine Bar.....Bethesda
Liquid Assets Wine & Martini Bar.....Ocean City
SoBo's Wine BistroSalisbury

Favorite Caterer

Ceresville Mansion.....Frederick
The Knife & Fork Caterers Inc.....Rockville
Putting on the Ritz Catering.....Savage
The Oaks Waterfront Inn & Events.....St. Michael's
Zeffert & Gold Catering
and Event Planning.....Baltimore

Pastry Chef of the Year

Executive Chef Jaime Ayala.....RANAZUL
Chef Arismendy Infantale.....Tio Pepe Restaurante
Chef Susan Limb and
Chef Patrick Musel.....Praline Bakery and Bistro
Chef Joseph Poupon.....Patisserie Poupon
Chef Cheryl Schneider.....Penny Chocolates & Gelato

The nomination and voting process is simple and confidential. In December 2008, diners and industry professionals were invited to visit the RAM website to fill out and submit an official 2009 Stars of the Industry Awards Gala nomination form. Finalists for the official awards ballot were selected from the nominees received. The final ballot, certified by a committee of distinguished hospitality professionals, was released in late January on the association's website at www.marylandrestaurants.com/stars and is set to be featured in various industry specific publications. Voting for the awards will close February 27, 2009.

The Annual Awards Gala is a black tie celebration that brings together 800 of hospitality's finest. Honored are the state's most remarkable restaurant and foodservice delegates who represent the industry's many successes. Guests enjoy a cocktail reception featuring RAM member restaurants, entertainment, a live auction, vodka ice bar and an unsurpassed fine dining experience prepared by exceptional industry chefs. Official event invitations will be delivered mid-February to industry supporters. The dining public is highly encouraged to reserve tickets and join us for this celebratory evening in support of their favorite restaurants!

To submit your votes please visit www.marylandrestaurants.com/stars. For more information about the "Stars of the Industry" Awards Gala or any of the mentioned honors please contact RAM Headquarters directly at 410.290.6800.

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The Restaurant Association of Maryland (RAM) has remained relevant to restaurateurs for over 80 years by maintaining core principles born out of the first national financial crisis. In 1927 a small group of Baltimore area restaurateurs met to deal with some of the challenges facing the economy and the Foodservice Industry. Today, RAM is a 2,000 member strong statewide trade association operated for the purpose of promoting, protecting and improving the foodservice industry in the State of Maryland. Since the very beginning, the Association has been run by restaurateurs and suppliers working not only for the benefit of dues paying members, but also for the restaurant industry as a whole. For more information about the restaurant industry in Maryland please visit our website at www.marylandrestaurants.com.