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## **Wine, Dine and Speak Your Mind!**

### *Hospitality and Tourism Professionals and Public Officials Gather for the Most Celebrated Legislative Reception of the Year.*

For the 19th consecutive year, the Restaurant Association of Maryland, in coordination with the Maryland Tourism Council (MTC) and the Maryland Hotel and Lodging Association (MHLA), will host the annual Taste of Maryland Legislative Reception on Monday, January 19, 2009 at the Loews Annapolis Hotel from 5 pm – 7:30 pm. While the event has upheld its reputation as an evening for delicious cuisines and fine wines, this year's reception has taken on an even greater responsibility due to the wide scale economic downturn taxing our nation's economy.

RAM has taken great strides to provide assistance to local restaurants during the current economic climate referred to as a "challenging" scene for restaurateurs by the association's President and CEO, Paul Hartgen. The Taste of Maryland was established 19 years ago with the intention to bring awareness to local tourism and hospitality programs throughout the state. "This year's annual reception has amassed an even greater significance due to the difficult economy. It is essential that hospitality patrons are able to converse with our government's decision makers now more than ever in an effort to better serve the public and industries they represent. The Taste of Maryland provides the open atmosphere both parties call for to converse and share concerns about the economy and future legislative action" commented Hartgen.

"This event highlights the significant role that restaurants play in promoting Maryland's hospitality and tourism industry," said RAM's Government Affairs Committee Chairman Fred Rosenthal of Jasper's Restaurants. From July 2007 through June 2008, the Maryland hospitality industry alone employed 174,000 restaurant and foodservice individuals at 9,532 establishments and generated \$8.7 billion dollars in sales. "Despite the economic downturn, we are happy that 25 of our members have made a commitment to contribute to this event by providing samples of their best culinary offerings," continued Rosenthal. The following is a full list of participating restaurants and their locations which can also be seen at

[www.thetasteofmaryland.com/restaurants](http://www.thetasteofmaryland.com/restaurants)

Aromi d'Italia	Granary Restaurant and Sassafras Grill	Maria's Sicilian Restaurant
Breeze Restaurant	The Greene Turtle Sports Bar & Grille	Nespresso USA, Inc.
Buddy's Crabs and Ribs	Greystone Grill	Phillips Seafood Restaurant
Carrol's Creek Waterfront Restaurant	Harris Crab House	Ruth's Chris Steak House
Clarence's Taste of New Orleans	Isaac's Restaurant	Saphron Restaurant
Edible Arrangements	Jordan's Steakhouse	Saval Foodservice
The Fish Market	Kyma	SoBo's Wine Bistro
Galway Bay, Killarney House	Lebanese Taverna	Westlawn Inn
Glory Days Grill		

The evening will also feature an open bar serving MillerCoors products, wines provided by the Maryland Wineries Association and refreshing FIJI Water.

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“A unified presence from our restaurateurs and industry allies at this event is imperative to the forward progression of the hospitality industry. This ‘call to action’ fosters a positive legislative environment and opens the level of communication. It is vital that the nation’s second largest employer - the restaurant industry’s voice - is heard,” added Hartgen.

To register for the Taste of Maryland Legislative Reception visit [www.thetasteofmaryland.com](http://www.thetasteofmaryland.com). Credentialed media interested in attending the reception should contact the Restaurant Association of Maryland 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](http://www.marylandrestaurants.com).