



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Chef Norman Van Aken to Host a Grand Cocktail Reception to Benefit the James Beard Foundation

*NORMAN'S Orlando will host a grand reception to recognize the **Good Food for Good** vision of the Foundation to celebrate, support, and elevate the people behind America's food culture and champion a standard of good food anchored in talent, equity, and sustainability.*

ORLANDO, Florida (September 5, 2025) – *NORMAN'S* Orlando restaurant founder and "Florida's Culinary Icon", Norman Van Aken, is collaborating with the James Beard Foundation to host a "Friends of James Beard Benefit" honoring Orlando James Beard recognized Chefs and Restaurateurs. This **"Toast to Orlando"** will be presented by Chef Van Aken, a James Beard Foundation "Who's Who" recipient and the first chef to be named to the James Beard Foundation's Board of Directors. *NORMAN'S* culinary team is led by Chef Carlos Robles-Molina who is joined in this celebration which features a group of honored Orlando chefs and restaurateurs, offering various hors d'oeuvres, wine selections, culinary and cocktail stations.

Chef Van Aken remarked "In 1988, I dedicated my first cookbook to Mr. Beard. His vision for the inclusiveness of all cultures spoke deeply to me. I am grateful to host this lasting appreciation of his work with the multigenerational chef and beverage artisans who devote their energies for this gathering year-round."

The event will be a jubilation of Orlando's most acclaimed chefs including Chef Lordfer Lalicon, Chefs James & Julie Petrakis, Chef Kevin Fonzo, Chef Brandon McGlamery, Chef Rabii Saber, and Sue & Jason Chin, with additional chefs forthcoming, as we honor their excellence and highlight our city's place on the world culinary stage.

We will also have exquisite wine, cocktail, and mocktail pairings curated by *NORMAN'S* Sommelier, Matthew Mercier, alongside celebrated wine professionals including Lee Pancake (Slate Wine Academy), Shaun Wright (Möet & Hennessey), Connor Doran (Slate Wine Academy), and Eric Renaud (ACE Wine &

Spirits). There will be multiple culinary and cocktail presentations throughout the restaurant and stunning Terrace, with live music, and a silent auction directly benefitting the work of the James Beard Foundation.

Complimentary Valet service along with ample free parking, are available at the 7924 Via Dellagio Way, Orlando, FL restaurant location.

You can get more information about the James Beard Foundation below, with tickets available via [OpenTable](#).

ABOUT NORMAN'S ORLANDO

NORMAN'S Orlando is an award-winning fine dining restaurant located on "Restaurant Row" right off of Sand Lake Road, in the Dellagio Town Center in Orlando. Chef Norman Van Aken is the culinary visionary behind the success of the restaurant, which offers seasonally-driven menus and cocktails in their main dining room, private dining spaces, alfresco Terrace, and bar lounge area.

ABOUT CHEF NORMAN VAN AKEN

Norman Van Aken, also known as "The Founding Father of New World Cuisine" is the chef and founder of *NORMAN'S* Orlando. His original namesake restaurant *NORMAN'S*, (in Coral Gables), was a finalist for "Outstanding Restaurant in America" and the only one thus far in the entire state. He founded the second iteration of *NORMAN'S* at the Ritz-Carlton in Orlando in 2003, a semi-finalist for "Outstanding Restaurant in America" in 2019. In 2023 he and his partners moved his namesake restaurant to the Dr. Phillips area of Orlando into a more modern space within the Dellagio Town Center. March 20th marked the 30th anniversary of the *NORMAN'S* restaurant brand.

For more information and to keep up on Chef Van Aken, please visit his website:

[NormanVanAken](#)

ABOUT JAMES BEARD FOUNDATION

James Beard Foundation believes in 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. We amplify and recognize, educate and train those committed to excellence — fostering a deep appreciation among food lovers for the industry's vital contributions to food culture. To learn more about the work of the James Beard Foundation, please visit their website below:

[James Beard Foundation](#)

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