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Press Contacts:

Willie Norkin / Jessica Cheng / Jessica Aptman

Susan Magrino Agency

Tel: 212.957.3005

Email: willie.norkin@smapr.com / jessica.cheng@smapr.com / jessica.aptman@smapr.com

JAMES BEARD FOUNDATION NAMES 2010 AMERICA'S CLASSICS AWARD HONOREES

*Five America's Classics Restaurants to be Honored at the Annual
James Beard Foundation Awards on Monday, May 3, 2010 in New York City*

New York, NY (February 8, 2010) – Today, the James Beard Foundation announced the five honorees for the 2010 James Beard Foundation Awards America's Classics category. The America's Classics award is given to restaurants with timeless appeal, beloved for quality food that reflects the character of their community – from small, regional restaurants, watering holes and shacks, to lunch counters and down-home eateries that have carved out a special place on the American culinary landscape. This year's five America's Classics honorees will be celebrated at the annual James Beard Foundation Awards, the nation's most prestigious recognition program honoring professionals in the food and beverage industries, in an awards ceremony taking place on Monday, May 3, 2010 at Lincoln Center's Avery Fisher Hall in New York City. This year's America's Classics award is sponsored by The Coca-Cola Company.

"The America's Classics category is a wonderful representation of America and its heartland that embodies the spirit of James Beard, who loved a paper cone full of fried clams just as much as a fine French dinner," says Susan Ungaro, President of the James Beard Foundation. "This is one of the Foundation's favorite award categories each year. We all have fond memories of local hangouts, neighborhood diners and family restaurants, places that always welcome their customers with open arms and, of course, delicious food. This award truly celebrates the great variety and authentic flavors of America's food scene."

The 2010 James Beard Foundation Awards America's Classics award winners are:

Mary & Tito's Cafe (2711 Fourth St. N.W., Albuquerque, NM; Owners: Mary Gonzales and Antoinette Knight)

In 1963, native New Mexicans and husband and wife team Tito and Mary Gonzales opened this beloved adobe cafe just north of downtown Albuquerque. When Tito, the cafe's original chef, passed away, Mary continued to run the front of the house, oversee the business and raise their family. Year after year, diners from near and far drop in to enjoy some of the best New Mexican food in the state, all while seated in a colorful dining room stocked with the Gonzales family's treasured mementos and photos of the many patrons who have visited. More than four decades later, Mary & Tito's Cafe continues to delight guests with its decades-old family recipes, including their signature fork-tender *carne adovada* (long-braised pork in red chile sauce), served as the centerpiece of many a meal, in overstuffed burritos, and as a filling for empanadas and enchiladas. Today, the cafe still remains in the family, with daughter Antoinette managing the restaurant while other family members help serve guests.

The Bright Star (304 19th St. North, Bessemer, AL; Owner: Jimmy Koikos and Nick Koikos)

In an area where many of the local restaurants are Greek-owned, The Bright Star continues to outshine the competition as the oldest and most storied of the pack. Tucked away in Bessemer, Alabama, an old steel town southwest of Birmingham, The Bright Star serves up an intriguing and delicious menu of Greek-meets-Southern cuisine, as interpreted by African American cooks. From broiled Greek-style snapper to fried red snapper throats (house-cut from whole Gulf fish), cornmeal-crust ed okra and field peas with snaps, the menu reads as a melting pot of culture and cuisine. The Bright Star has been family-run since 1907 when Greek immigrant Tom Bonduris (a Peloponnese native) first opened the restaurant, with its tiled floors, mirrored and marbled walls, intricate woodwork and painted murals lining its walls. His cousin, Bill Koikos, emigrated from Greece in 1920 to join the business, and today, many of Tom and Bill's descendants still run the restaurant, with septuagenarian Jimmy Koikos and his younger brother Nicky leading the charge since 1966.

Al's French Frys (1251 Williston Road, South Burlington, VT; Owner: Bill Bissonette)

Al's French Frys has been a Burlington-area institution since Al and Genevieve Rusterholz first opened the restaurant in the 1940s. Originally housed in a small hut with an open front counter and no inside seating, Al's quickly became known for their crispy, crackly made-from-scratch fries, so much so that spud enthusiasts still line up day and night to get their french fry fill, whether it's a pint or the ever-popular quart size. Today, the Bissonette family owns and operates the restaurant, led by Bill Bissonette, who makes sure that the famous fries remain true to the original recipe, even after 60 years.

Calumet Fisheries (3259 E 95th Street, Chicago; Owners: The Kotlick and Toll Families)

Set on the edge of the Calumet River on the 95th Street Bridge on Chicago's South Side, Calumet Fisheries has been a foodie and fisherman favorite since brothers-in-law Sid Kotlick and Len Toll first opened its doors in 1948. Strictly carryout (there are no seats, no bathroom, no credit cards and no parking), the stand-alone shack serves freshly fried seafood, from oysters, shrimp, scallops, crab and catfish to perch, smelts and frog legs. But Calumet Fisheries may be best known for their oak-smoked seafood – salmon steaks, trout, chubs, shrimp, etc. – slowly cured in a tiny smokehouse behind the shop. Still owned and operated by the Kotlick and Toll families, Calumet Fisheries remains the best reason to cross the 95th Street Bridge.

Gustavus Inn (PO Box 60, Gustavus, AK; Owners: JoAnn and David Lesh)

Gustavus, Alaska is home to 400 citizens who all have one thing in common: their love for the Gustavus Inn. A part of the Lesh family for three generations the Gustavus Inn, a red-roofed farmhouse inn and restaurant, has welcomed locals and visitors alike for years. At supper, the family-style meal often features a menu full of fresh-caught seafood straight from the chilly Alaskan waters. Dungeness crab, salmon, sablefish and a dish called Halibut Caddy Ganty – a quintessential Alaskan dish of fish cooked with onion, mayo and sour cream – all share pride of place on the menu with fresh produce from the Inn's garden, which thrives despite the limited growing season.

"We are honored to be a sponsor of this year's James Beard Foundation Awards, and in particular, of a category that resonates with Coca-Cola's own place on the American cultural landscape," says Dana Barba, AVP Marketplace Development of Coca-Cola North America, sponsor of this year's America's Classics award. "The James Beard Foundation Awards recognize the best of the best in food, restaurants and chefs and our association brings the equity of great brands together."

To qualify for the America's Classics award, establishments must have been in existence at least 10 years and be locally owned, and such spots are usually informal and moderately priced. The honorees are selected each year by the James Beard Foundation's Restaurant Committee, which is composed of 17 people throughout the country, many of whom are notable food critics and culinary writers. The Foundation also holds a public call to entries (via a website hosted by StarChefs.com), allowing the public the opportunity to offer suggestions for which restaurants they think should win.

Established in 1990, the James Beard Foundation Awards recognize culinary professionals for excellence and achievement in their fields and continue to emphasize the Foundation's mission: to celebrate, preserve, and nurture America's culinary heritage and diversity. The annual James Beard Foundation Awards honor the best and the brightest talents in the food and beverage industries, celebrating outstanding achievement in each of the following categories: Restaurants and Chefs, Books, Journalism, Restaurant Design and Graphics, Broadcast Media, and special achievement awards.

The annual James Beard Foundation Media and Book Awards Dinner, an exclusive event honoring the nation's top cookbooks, food journalists and culinary broadcast programs, will take place on Sunday, May 2, 2010 at Espace in New York City. The following evening, the James Beard Foundation Awards Ceremony and Gala Reception will take place at Lincoln Center's Avery Fisher Hall in New York City, during which the Restaurant and Chef and Restaurant Design and Graphics awards will be handed out, along with a number of special achievement awards, including the America's Classics honorees. All award winners receive a certificate and a bronze medallion engraved with the James Beard Foundation Awards insignia.

The 2010 James Beard Foundation Awards are presented in association with All-Clad Metalcrafters; Premier Sponsor: Green & Black's® Organic Chocolate, Mercedes-Benz USA; Supporting Sponsors: The Coca-Cola Company, Delta Air Lines, Food Network NYC Wine & Food Festival, illy caffè North America, Inc., Louisiana Office of Tourism, Southern Wine & Spirits of New York, Stella Artois; Gala Reception Sponsors: Acqua Panna® Natural Spring Water, Food Network South Beach Wine & Food Festival, Pernod Ricard USA, S.Pellegrino® Sparkling Natural Mineral Water; Media Sponsor: The Wall Street Journal and with additional support from Chefwear.

About the James Beard Foundation

Founded in 1986, 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. Find insights on food at the James Beard Foundation's blog [Delights & Prejudices](#). Join the James Beard Foundation on [Facebook](#). Follow the James Beard Foundation on [Twitter](#).