



**BENCHMARK
HOSPITALITY**
INTERNATIONAL

News Release

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**Benchmark Hospitality International Chefs to be Featured for the
Sixth Consecutive Year at James Beard House, New York**

Seven-course “Benchmark Holiday Dinner”



New York, October 2010 ... For the sixth consecutive year, chefs from Benchmark Hospitality International’s fine dining restaurants, luxury hotels and resorts have been invited to cook at the legendary James Beard House in New York City. The seven-course “Benchmark Holiday Dinner” will take place Thursday, December 16th, 2010. Featured Benchmark Hospitality chefs will be Brian West, executive chef, Hotel Contessa and its signature restaurant Las Ramblas on the Riverwalk in San Antonio, Texas; Alan Gould, executive chef of Nine18, the restaurant located at the Villas of Grand Cypress in Orlando, Florida; Peter Csikos, executive chef, The Heldrich and its signature restaurant, Christopher’s, in New Brunswick, New Jersey; Francisco Aceves, executive chef of Stonewall Resort and Stillwaters Restaurant, located in Weston, West Virginia.

Mary Watson, Benchmark Hospitality’s chief sommelier, has paired each course with fine wines. She will be present at the James Beard House to discuss her wine selections and pairings, doing so in partnership with the Benchmark chefs.

The Benchmark Holiday Dinner will begin at 7:00 pm on December 16th with an hors d'oeuvres and wine reception. A seven-course chefs tasting menu will be served starting at 8:00 pm. Reservations can be arranged by calling the James Beard House at 212-627-2308 and are \$130 per person for members of the James Beard Foundation and \$170 per person for the general public.

"Cooking at the James Beard House is such an honor for Benchmark Hospitality's chefs, and offers us the opportunity to showcase the immense culinary talent within our company," said Giorgi Di Lemis, vice president food & beverage. "To be invited back by the James Beard Foundation for the sixth consecutive year is an honor of the highest order. We're deeply appreciative and look forward to an extraordinary evening."

"Having the Benchmark Holiday Dinner at the James Beard House in December has become a tradition," said Izabela Wojcik, director of house programming for the James Beard Foundation. "We're thrilled to welcome Benchmark's chefs for another delectable holiday dining experience for the public and the members of the James Beard Foundation."

The James Beard House was home to the storied James Beard, America's first celebrity chef who is celebrated today as the dean of American Cookery. Mr. Beard lived in his Greenwich Village townhouse from 1976 until his passing 1985. A gifted impresario who along with his great friend, Julia Child, led the way for many of today's celebrity chefs, James Beard established cooking schools and published over 20 important cookbooks, many of which are still in print. As important, he left a legacy of culinary excellence and integrity for generations of America's home cooks and professional chefs. The name, James Beard, remains today synonymous with American cuisine.

The Benchmark Holiday Dinner for 2010

Menu

Reception

Hors d'oeuvres

Bone Marrow Cones
Patty Pan Squash With Tapenade
Grass Fed Steak Tartar
Florida Stone Crab Melange
Korbel Brut Rosé
Korbel Natural
Cotton Candy Cocktail

First Course

Maine Lobster, Poached Quail Egg And Cous Cous Caviar
William Hill, Central Coast Chardonnay 2009

Second Course

Seared Scallops with Ginger, Persimmon And Heirloom Tomatoes
Arrowood, Late Harvest Riesling 2005

Third Course

Long Island Duck Three Ways.
Vintage Port Reduction

Veramonte, Primus, Chile, 2007

Fourth Course

Southwestern Intermezzo

Fifth Course

Colorado Free Roaming Bison

*Ranchero Demi-glace, Mezcal Béarnaise, Sweet Potato And Corn
Quintessa, Meritage, Napa Valley, 2007*

Sixth Course

Artisanal Cheeses From Small Family Farms And Accoutrements

Goat's Milk

Kunik Triple Cream

*Goat's Milk With Jersey Cow Milk Added, Bloomy Rind
Nettle Meadow Goat Dairy, Warrensburg, New York
Terra D'oro Moscato, California 2009*

Cow's Milk

Hudson Red

*Raw Jersey Cow's Milk Washed Twice A Week For Three Months In A Brine
Twin Maple Farm, Ghent, New York
Samuel Adams Double Bock*

Sheep's Milk

Shaker Blue

*Raw Sheep's Milk Blue Made In The Roquefort Tradition
And Aged 5 – 6 Months
Old Chatham Shepherding, Old Chatham, New York
Terra D'Oro Zinfandel Port*

Seventh Course

*Mignardaise Of Truffles, Macaroons, Petite Pastry
Edmeades, Perli Vineyard, Mendocino Late Harvest Zinfandel, 2006*

The Benchmark Hospitality Chefs

**Brian West, Executive Chef
Hotel Contessa, San Antonio, Texas**

Brian West is the executive chef of Las Ramblas restaurant, located on the Riverwalk level of the Hotel Contessa. Chef West brings 19 years of experience to the table, specializing in Spanish fare including tapas, ensaladas and signature dishes such as Cornish Game Hen Cocido and Kurobuta Pork Rib Chop. Las Ramblas reflects the theme and décor of the Hotel Contessa, transporting the dining guest to the brick walkways of Spain, amidst a casual yet elegant setting.

Chef West, a graduate of the Art Institute of Houston, was previously a sous chef at the Westin La Cantera Resort before moving to Biga on the Banks as the banquet chef. He served as executive chef of Fresh Horizons Catering and then opened his own restaurant, Café Paladar, before moving into the executive chef position in 2009 at the Hotel Contessa.

Brian is an award-winning chef who has received accolades from *The New York Times* and was named one of the Top 100 Chefs in Texas by *Texas Monthly* magazine.

Alan Gould, Executive Chef
The Villas of Grand Cypress, Orlando, Florida

Alan Gould is executive chef for The Villas of Grand Cypress located in Orlando, Florida. Chef Gould has been at the helm of the culinary department for 15 years. He is an award-winning chef that oversees the culinary operations for all property dining at Grand Cypress, including The Club and Nine18, formally known as the award-winning Black Swan.

Chef Gould started his culinary career at the Four Seasons San Antonio where he served as a Sous Chef. He then took the same position at the Hyatt Regency Grand Cypress in Orlando. Chef Gould has served as executive chef at other prestigious properties like the PGA National Resort & Spa, the Imperial Golf Club Naples, the Ocean Club Key Biscayne, and Caneel Bay in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Chef Gould graduated from the Culinary Institute of America in 1983. He was awarded Manager of the Year at Grand Cypress in 1998 and 2008. Chef Gould is also a member of the American Culinary Federation – Central Florida Chapter. His passion for cooking is evident in everything that comes out of the kitchen. His vision and artistic techniques truly gives guests a dining experience that is unmatched.

Peter Csikos, Executive Chef
The Heldrich, New Brunswick, New Jersey

Peter Csikos is executive chef for The Heldrich, the award-winning property anchoring the renaissance of downtown New Brunswick, New Jersey

As executive chef, Mr. Csikos oversees and provides leadership for the entire culinary operation at the elegant downtown property, including Christopher's Restaurant, Christopher's Bar, a vast banquet operation, and in-room dining.

Chef Csikos previously served as executive chef at the Hilton in Woodcliff Lake, New Jersey, and in the same role at the Sheraton Crossroads of Mahwah, New Jersey. His first position within the state was as executive chef at Pegasus Restaurant in East Rutherford.

While in New York City, Chef Csikos was director of food and beverage for the storied Warwick Hotel. He was promoted to this position following success as executive chef for the property, which has a specialty in French and International Cuisine. Mr. Csikos held the position of executive sous chef for landmark New York Palace, working under renowned chef Andre Rene.

Originally from Hungary where he received his culinary education and training in International and French Classical cuisine, Peter Csikos gained early experience as chef working for fine dining establishments in Cologne, Germany, and with large scale restaurant operations in Budapest, Hungary. While in Europe, his culinary positions included such titles as head chef, chef saucier, and chef de partie.

Peter Csikos is a graduate of the Culinary Institute of Budapest. He received additional culinary training at Johnson & Wales University of Providence, Rhode Island. Chef Csikos has previously cooked at the James Beard House.

**Francisco “Paco” Aceves, Executive Chef
Stonewall Resort, Weston, West Virginia**

Francisco “Paco” Aceves is executive chef for Stonewall Resort, located near Weston, West Virginia. A graduate of the Culinary Institute of America, Chef Aceves previously held the title of executive chef for one of West Virginia’s most popular restaurants, The Bridge Road Bistro in Charleston. Prior to this appointment he served as banquet chef for the Four Diamond La Posada de Santa Fe Resort & Spa in Santa Fe, New Mexico, gaining experience in southwestern cuisine.

Early in his career, Paco Aceves was employed as sous chef for The Houston Country Club in Houston, Texas, where he trained under Certified Master Chef Fritz Gitschner. During his tenure there, Chef Aceves was chosen by Gitschner to participate as part of the United States culinary team at the Bocuse d’Or in Lyon, France, one of the world’s most distinguished culinary competitions.

At the launch of his career, Francisco Aceves apprenticed at Handke’s Cuisine in Columbus, Ohio, where he trained under Certified Master Chef Hartmut Handke. Chef Aceves has previously cooked at the James Beard House.

**Mary Watson-DeLauder
Chief Sommelier, Benchmark Hospitality International**

Mary Watson-DeLauder is chief sommelier for Benchmark Hospitality International, the first professional to serve in this position for the leading hospitality management company. Ms. Watson was previously the award-winning sommelier for Lansdowne Resort and its popular On the Potomac restaurant in Leesburg, Virginia, Benchmark Hospitality’s east coast flagship property. She held this role for 16 years, garnering several awards along the way.

Throughout her tenure with Benchmark Hospitality, Mary Watson has been instrumental in strengthening the company’s relationships with signature wineries in Virginia, nationally and internationally. She developed an acclaimed curriculum of food & wine and Culinary University classes, which provide an in-depth look at a variety of American and International cuisine and wine.

Ms. Watson has also developed the wine programs for Benchmark Hospitality International’s newest properties, including Costa d’Esta Beach Resort and its signature restaurant, Oriente, in Vero Beach, Florida, and Naples Bay Resort and its restaurant, Olio on the Bay, in Naples, Florida.

Mary Watson's expertise has been recognized nationally. She has been the recipient of the *Wine Spectator* award for the past 18 years, and has been featured nationally on *NBC's Today Show* and in countless regional and national consumer and food & wine publications. She is an active member of the Women Chef Restaurateurs, Knights of the Vine, Society of Wine Educators and the Virginia Vinifera Wine Growers Association.

Ms. Watson has received the Gold Cluster of Virginia Award and served as a judge for the Virginia Wine Growers Association Wine Competition, the American Wine Competition and the International Wine Competition. She has served as sommelier for numerous dinners at the James Beard House in New York City.

Attached Photo L-R: Brian West, Alan Gould, Peter Csikos, Francisco Aceves, Mary Watson-DeLauder

The James Beard Foundation www.jamesbeard.org, based in New York City, is the definitive culinary arts organization in the United States dedicated to showcasing American chefs' talents. It is named after the great American chef, Dean of American Cooking, and Father of American Gastronomy, James Beard, who authored over 20 cookbooks and hundreds of articles, many of which are still in print. Beard appeared on network television's first cookery program in the 1940s and established a renowned cooking school. The Foundation and The James Beard House, where chefs from around the world showcase their talents, are situated in Manhattan in Beard's original townhouse, located in Greenwich Village.

The **Hotel Contessa**, honored by *Condé Nast Traveler* as one of the Top 100 Hotels in the World, embraces the essence of San Antonio with its Spanish architecture and warm Mediterranean design. The 12-story all-suite hotel, located on the famous San Antonio Riverwalk, features 265 luxurious guest suites; outdoor heated pool with adjacent AVEDA Spa; Las Ramblas & Cork Bar and 10,000 square feet of meeting and conference space. Hotel Contessa www.thehotelcontessa.com is a Benchmark Hospitality International property, setting the standard for integrity, quality and service.

Villas of Grand Cypress, managed by Benchmark Hospitality International, is a Four-Diamond property located in the Lake Buena Vista area of Orlando, adjacent to Walt Disney World and just minutes from Universal Studios and Sea World. A member of Preferred Hotels & Resorts, the property is part of a 1,500-acre resort complex that includes The Villas of Grand Cypress, which features 146 elegantly appointed accommodations comprised of Club Suites and one-, two-, three- and four-bedroom villas with full kitchens, living rooms and dining rooms. For additional information about the Villas of Grand Cypress and Grand Cypress Resort, call (877) 330-7376 or visit www.grandcypress.com.

The Heldrich is located in the cultural heart of New Jersey in New Brunswick. The Benchmark Hospitality International-operated property is situated at 10 Livingston Avenue across from the city's famed Theatre Row. The Heldrich is west of important US Route 1 and four blocks from the New Brunswick Train Station (serving the Northeast Corridor: Boston-New York-Philadelphia-Washington) and close to Exit 9 of the NJ Turnpike. It is 45 minutes outside New York City and has rail service to Newark Liberty International Airport (EWR). The Heldrich features a 248-guestroom luxury hotel, Christopher's Restaurant, serving freshly prepared specialties created in an exhibition kitchen to delight even the most discriminating palate, Christopher's Bar, and an elegant ballroom, ideal for social and corporate gatherings. For more information on The Heldrich, call 732-729-4670 or visit www.theheldrich.com.

The Four Diamond-rated **Stonewall Resort** is a 208-guestroom property with a lakeside lodge and lakeside cottages, a conference center, restaurants, complete fitness center and swimming pool, spa and an 18-hole Arnold Palmer Signature Golf Course. The resort is located at Stonewall Jackson Lake State Park near Weston, West Virginia. Stonewall Resort is a joint private/public development between McCabe-Henley LP and the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources. Benchmark Hospitality International operates Stonewall Resort.

About Benchmark Hospitality International

Benchmark Hospitality International is a leader in the management and marketing of resorts, conference centers, hotels, and Personal Luxury Hotels™. The independent company, launched in 1980, is a founding member of the International Association of Conference Centers. Benchmark Hospitality is a worldwide organization operating properties in major metropolitan and resort destinations. Benchmark's international headquarters is located in The Woodlands, Texas, near Houston. The company's northeast regional office is in New Jersey, with international offices in Tokyo, Japan, and Santiago, Chile. For the location of Benchmark's properties and additional information, visit www.benchmarkhospitality.com.