



**PRESS RELEASE**  
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**New Hampshire Culinary Scene Comes Up Big in 2020 James Beard Award Semifinals**

*The Black Trumpet Bistro, Jumpin' Jay's Fish Café, Vida Cantina and The Puritan Backroom  
recognized by James Beard Foundation*

**Concord - (March 3, 2020)** – The prestigious [James Beard Foundation](#) recognized culinary leaders in Manchester and Portsmouth with the recent release of the 2020 semifinalists. The Black Trumpet Bistro in Portsmouth was named a semifinalist in the “Outstanding Hospitality” category, Portsmouth restaurateur Jay McSharry of Jumpin’ Jay’s Fish Café, Vida Cantina, Moxy and others, was named a semifinalist in the “Outstanding Restaurateur” category, and Chef David Vargas of Vida Cantina was named a semifinalist in the “Best Chef – Northeast” category. In addition, the Puritan Backroom in Manchester was one of six restaurants nationwide to receive an “[America’s Classic](#)” award from the James Beard Foundation.

The James Beard Awards, now in its 30th year, are widely considered America’s most coveted honor for chefs, restaurants, journalists, authors, and other leaders in the food and beverage industry. The James Beard Foundation’s America’s Classic awards are “given to regional establishments, often family-owned, that are cherished for their quality food, local character, and lasting appeal,” according to the Foundation.

“Our dynamic restaurant scene is one of the many reasons why New Hampshire is the premier, year-round destination in the northeast and we are extremely proud to see these culinary leaders in Manchester and Portsmouth recognized by the James Beard Foundation,” said Lori Harnois, director, New Hampshire Division of Travel and Tourism Development. “Chefs across New Hampshire are tirelessly working to develop delicious and innovative dishes and we would encourage residents and visitors to experience what makes New Hampshire’s food scene special.”

The [Black Trumpet Bistro](#) is a cozy neighborhood bistro featuring a strong connection to local food sources, coupled with Latin and Mediterranean influences. Jay McSharry’s [Jumpin’ Jay’s Fish Café](#) is one of the leading seafood eateries in the northeast, featuring New England classics

and creative combinations. McSharry runs a family of 11 restaurants, including [Moxy](#), [The Franklin](#) and [The Railpenny Tavern](#). At [Vida Cantina](#), which is also part of McSharry's restaurant family, Chef David Vargas offers a modern take on Mexican cuisine, boasting adventurous flavors and local ingredients.

In honoring the [Puritan Backroom](#) with an America's Classic award, the James Beard Foundation noted the iconic "mainstay," which has been in operation since 1917, still sees customers "line up for Puritan ice cream, and crowd into booths for American comfort food and Greek classics." The Foundation also noted the restaurant's renowned chicken tenders and mudslides.

The James Beard Foundation holds an online open call for entries beginning in mid-October of each year. Entries are reviewed by an independent panel of more than 250 volunteers nationwide, along with the Foundation's Restaurant and Chef Committee. Based on the results and eligibility requirements for each award, the committee produces a nominating ballot listing semifinalists in each of the 23 Restaurant and Chef Award categories.

More than 600 judges—including leading regional restaurant critics, food and wine editors, culinary educators, and past James Beard Award winners—vote for semifinalists to determine final nominees in each category. The Foundation will announce final nominees in each category on March 25. The same group of judges then votes on nominees to select winners. The James Beard Foundation will announce winners in each category in May.

#### **ABOUT THE DIVISION OF TRAVEL AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT**

The Division of Travel and Tourism Development, as part of the New Hampshire Department of Business and Economic Affairs, works with the state's seven travel regions to increase visitation, travel and visitor expenditures in order to expand business activity and employment throughout the state. The division is responsible for domestic and international advertising and public relations, literature publication and distribution, [www.visitnh.gov](http://www.visitnh.gov) administration, grant administration and research to monitor and measure the impact of travel and tourism to the state. For more information about New Hampshire tourism, call 603-271-2665 or visit [www.visitnh.gov](http://www.visitnh.gov).