



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**SAVE THE DATE!**

**BRENNAN'S OF HOUSTON TO HOST SECOND ANNUAL  
CELEBRITY CHEF TOUR DINNER BENEFITING THE JAMES BEARD FOUNDATION**

*A celebration of Houston's best, Brennan's Executive Chef Danny Trace Welcomes Chefs Chris Shepherd, Justin Yu, Hugo Ortega and Phillippe Schmidt*

(HOUSTON, TX; August 27, 2012)—The [Celebrity Chef Tour](#) benefiting the James Beard Foundation is once again coming to Brennan's in Houston on Thursday, September 27, 2012, for a night of culinary celebration with Houston's top chefs. Several of Houston's most notable chefs will come together for an evening of spectacular dining.

"We are once again honored to host the James Beard Celebrity Tour at Brennan's and welcome a some of Houston's finest Chefs to create a lavish six course culinary experience."

This year, Houston's most renowned chefs will create a distinct menu that will extract

traditional southern flavors to create seasonal dishes for guests within its collaborative menu. A portion of the evening's proceeds benefit to the James Beard Foundation educational programs, which include continuing education classes, guided tastings, readings, conferences, children's programs, scholarship opportunities for aspiring culinary students, and volunteer opportunities for current culinary students. To date the celebrity chef tour has raised more than \$850,000 for the Foundation.

**Tickets are available beginning August 28<sup>th</sup> for \$170 per person, (inclusive of wine pairings, tax, and gratuity) and can be reserved by calling Jeff Black at 720.201.1853 or by visiting <http://www.celebritycheftour.com>.**

### **About Danny Trace, Brennan's of Houston**

Fresh local produce, wild and sustainable foods, and Cajun and Creole influences form the foundation for Brennan's of Houston Executive Chef Danny Trace's culinary style. An integral veteran of the Commander's Family of Restaurants, Chef Trace was the executive chef of Commander's Palace & On The Rocks Bar at Harbor Walk Village in Destin, FL before coming to Houston. Chef Trace was hand-picked by co-owner Alex Brennan-Martin to re-open and guide the landmark kitchen at Brennan's after months of rebuilding from Hurricane Ike.

### **Chris Shepherd, Underbelly**

Chef Chris Shepherd isn't originally from Texas, but he got here as soon as he could. The fresh, local ingredients inspired him, scouring the farms of Oklahoma as a child in search of straight-from-the-vine tomatoes, and fresh corn. Two decades ago, he applied to several culinary schools in the South and ultimately decided on somewhere he had never been before, Houston. The cultural diversity of the city intrigued Chris while attending the Art Institute. Chris began his career as a line cook at Brennan's working his way up to Executive Sous-Chef and Sommelier. He spent 9 years at Brennan's, nurturing his passion and talent in the culinary arts and developing his own style. Chris left Brennan's to become Executive Chef of Catalan where he maintained partial control of the menu for 5 years. Underbelly is Chris' first concept that pays tribute to the abundant culinary resources, cultural diversity of our city and rich local food history. Chris works with local farmers and ranchers to raise herds, grow produce, and commits to purchasing whole crops exclusive to Underbelly. Chris is also using local by-catch, lesser known gulf species caught during commercial fishing. This relationship between fisherman and chefs is unique to Houston and promotes sustainability and more responsible use of the gulf's resources. With Underbelly's extensive butchering and charcuterie program, Chris' passion for using the whole animal further demonstrates his devotion to the responsibilities of a well-run kitchen.

### **Justin Yu, Oxheart**

Justin has worked some of the country's most notable restaurants such as \*17 in Houston, Texas, Green Zebra and Spring Restaurants in Chicago, Illinois and Ubuntu in Napa, California. After staging abroad at In de Wulf in Dranouter, Belgium and AOC and Geranium Restaurants in Copenhagen, Denmark, Justin has come home to open Oxheart to convey a progressive perspective on regional product. In his free time, Justin enjoys hamburgers, money cats and making side bets on fantasy football leagues.

### **Hugo Ortega, Hugo's and Backstreet Café**

Executive chef/co-owner of Hugo's and Backstreet Cafe, a finalist for the 2012 James Beard Foundation Awards, was born in Mexico City, and is the oldest of a family of eight children. At 15, he began working at one of several Procter & Gamble factories in Mexico to help support his family. In 1984, Ortega immigrated to Houston with a cousin and a friend. He had no contacts or job leads, but was determined to make a life for himself in America. Ortega graduated from HCC's Culinary Arts program in November 1992 and assumed the role of chef at Backstreet Cafe; he became executive chef in 1995. The talented chef has made two guest chef appearances at the prestigious James Beard House in New York City. Ortega was named Chef of the Year in 2002 and 2011 at the Houston Culinary Awards, and Hugo's was named "Restaurant of the Year" in 2003 by both the Houston Press and My Table magazines. Ortega and Tracy Vaught were married in 1994, and in February 1997 they had their first child, Sophia Elizabeth.

### **Chef Philippe Schmit, Philippe Restaurant + Lounge**

Born and raised in Roanne, France, Philippe first apprenticed at age 14 at a local restaurant in the picturesque French town northwest of Lyon. Upon leaving Lyon, Schmit trained at three Michelin 2-Star restaurants in Paris, in addition to securing positions in Holland and England. In 1990, he set sail for New York and ignited his stateside career by earning positions as sous chef and executive chef at several renowned French restaurants, such as La Goulue and Orsay, and before moving to Houston in 2004 to open *bistro moderne*. Philippe Schmit is now executive chef and owner of Houston's Philippe Restaurant + Lounge, which was recognized by *Texas Monthly* as one of Texas' "Best New Restaurants" following its spring 2011 debut. One year later, Philippe was recognized "Best Wine Restaurant" in America by *Wine Enthusiast Magazine*. Most recently, Schmit was named "Master Chef of France", the most sought after award given to chefs dedicated to French cuisine.

### **About the Celebrity Chef Tour benefiting the James Beard Foundation:**

Since its inception in 2004, the Celebrity Chef Tour benefiting the James Beard Foundation has become a favorite event for both the chefs to participate in and guests to attend, and has raised more than \$850,000 for the James Beard Foundation. The Celebrity Chef Tour brings James Beard Foundation Award winners and other celebrity chefs to private clubs, resorts, and other exclusive venues around the country for spectacular dining events. The tour was created to benefit the James Beard Foundation and to promote the culinary arts across America.

Proud sponsors of the Celebrity Chef Tour benefiting the James Beard Foundation include, Mercedes Benz, Stella Artois, and VisaSignature®. Partners include *Wine & Spirits* magazine, Certified Angus Beef, Hudson Valley Foie Gras, Fiji Water, and Forever Cheese.

**About the James Beard House and the James Beard Foundation:**

James Beard is widely recognized as the father of American culinary arts. Throughout his life, he pursued and advocated the highest standards, and served as a mentor to emerging talents. The James Beard House is where Beard lived, taught, and welcomed friends and colleagues who shared his love for food. Shortly after he passed away, a group of friends sparked a drive to save his home and create a living memorial and a center for the culinary community. It has become what Founding President Peter Kump envisioned it could be: “a culinary place to see and taste the work of this country’s most talented chefs, winemakers, cookbook authors, and teachers.” The James Beard House’s sister nonprofit organization, the James Beard Foundation, the mission of which is to “celebrate, preserve, and nurture America’s culinary heritage and diversity in order to elevate the appreciation of our culinary excellence,” furthers Mr. Kump’s vision by providing scholarships and volunteer opportunities for aspiring culinary professionals, educating today’s youth on the importance of good food and essential nutrition.

For more information, please see [www.celebritycheftour.com](http://www.celebritycheftour.com).

**ABOUT BRENNAN’S OF HOUSTON**

The Brennan’s of Houston kitchen has explored the vast spectrum of Creole’s evolution in the “Bayou City.” Cultural influences in South Texas and an abundance of fresh produce unique to the region have provided ample opportunities for delicious Texas variations on time-honored Louisiana themes. Along the way, the passionate Brennan’s team has received accolades establishing the restaurant as one of the finest in the city. Awards such as Exxon Mobil’s Four-Star designation in 2000, and a nod from restaurant reporter John Mariani in 1997, who called former Executive Chef and General Manager Carl Walker “one of America’s most influential chefs”, are just two such accomplishments Brennan’s counts on its list of accolades. Brennan’s has also been regularly rated among Houston’s “Best” and “Most Popular” restaurants in the Zagat Survey.

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**For more information, or to schedule an interview, please contact Amy Johannessen at Wagstaff Worldwide: 212.227.7575 or [amy@Wagstaffworldwide.com](mailto:amy@Wagstaffworldwide.com)**

**For more information regarding The James Beard Celebrity Chef Tour, please contact Kate Lacroix at 303-886-6260 or [dishpr@gmail.com](mailto:dishpr@gmail.com)**