

The Beard Awards honor the finest American food, but . . .

Mexican spot is top restaurant; rising-star chef cooks Japanese

By Jerry Shriver
USA TODAY

"Celebrating the Art of American Food" was the evening's theme, but ethnic cuisine stole the show at Monday night's 17th annual James Beard Awards in New York honoring the nation's top chefs, restaurateurs, beverage professionals and cookbook authors.

Frontera Grill, a pioneering Mexican eatery in Chicago owned by Rick and Deann Bayless, was named outstanding restaurant, and David Chang, who cooks Japanese comfort food at Momofuku Noodle Bar in New York, was named rising-star chef, which is given to chefs age 30 or younger.

Winners in other major categories came from restaurants with American and French pedigrees, as has been the case in previous years: Thomas Keller of The French Laundry in Yountville, Calif., was named outstanding restaurateur; Michel Richard of Michel Richard Citronelle in Washington, D.C., outstanding chef; L'Atelier de Joel Robuchon in New York, best new restaurant; and Michael Laskonis of Le Bernardin in New York, outstanding pastry chef.

More than 1,600 food fans attended the awards presentation and gala reception at Avery Fisher Hall in Lincoln Center, which honored the 20th anniversary of the James Beard Foundation. Winners in 62 categories received bronze medals bearing the likeness of James Beard, a pioneer of American cooking.

Other top winners (a full list is available at jamesbeard.org):

- ▶ **Wine service:** Michel Richard Citronelle, Washington, D.C.
- ▶ **Wine/spirits professional:** Paul Draper, Ridge Vineyards, Cupertino, Calif.
- ▶ **Restaurant service:** Tru, Chicago
- ▶ **Great Lakes chef:** Grant Achatz, Chicago
- ▶ **Mid-Atlantic chef:** R.J. Cooper III, Vidalia, and Frank Ruta, Palena, both in Washington, D.C.
- ▶ **Midwest chef:** Celina Tio, The American Restaurant, Kansas City, Mo.
- ▶ **New York City chef:** David Waltuck, Chanterelle



By H. Darr Beiser, USA TODAY

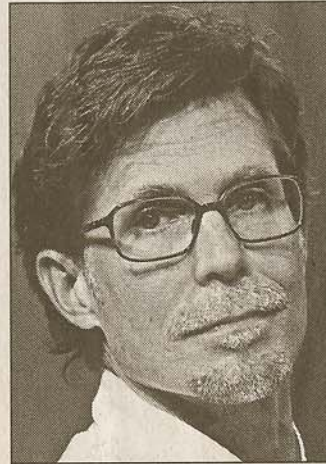
In Greenville, Miss.: Doe's takes honors for one of America's Classics restaurants.

- ▶ **Northeast chef:** Frank McClelland, L'Espalier, Boston
- ▶ **Northwest chef:** John Sundstrom, Lark, Seattle
- ▶ **Pacific chef:** Traci Des Jardins, Jardiniere, San Francisco
- ▶ **Southeast chef:** Scott Peacock, Watershed, Decatur, Ga.
- ▶ **Southwest chef:** Nobuo Fukuda, Sea Saw, Scottsdale, Ariz.
- ▶ **South chef:** Donald Link, Herbsaint, New Orleans.
- ▶ **America's Classics restaurants:** Aunt Carrie's, Narragansett, R.I.; Doe's Eat Place, Greenville, Miss.; Primanti Brothers, Pittsburgh; Brookville Hotel, Abilene, Kan.; The Pickwick, Duluth, Minn.; and Weaver D's, Athens, Ga.
- ▶ **Cookbook of the year:** *The Lee Brothers Southern Cookbook* (W.W. Norton, \$35).



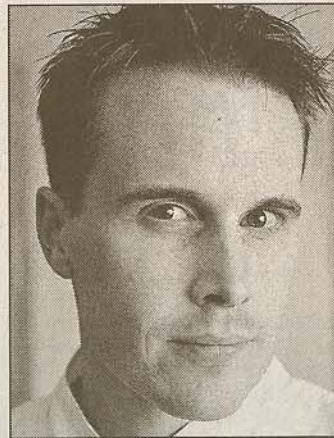
By Gerard Bedeau, MGM Mirage

Robuchon: His L'Atelier de Joel Robuchon won best new eatery.



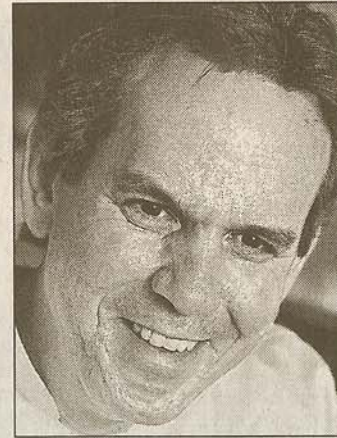
Food Network

Bayless: Outstanding restaurant for Mexican grill in Chicago.



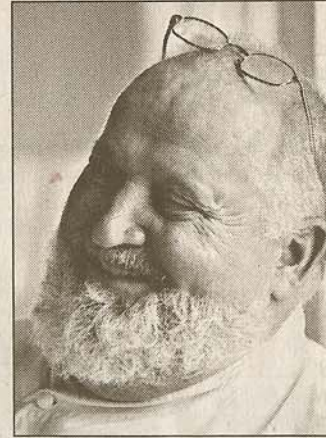
By H. Darr Beiser, USA TODAY

Achatz: Chef at Chicago's Alinea took honors for Great Lakes region.



By Richard Drew, AP

Keller: Best restaurateur for The French Laundry in Yountville, Calif.



By Deborah Joy

Richard: Outstanding chef cooks up at Citronelle in Washington, D.C.