

FOOD & DRINK



FOOD FOR THOUGHT
For the gala reception following the awards at Lyric Opera of Chicago, the chefs, consisting of former James Beard Foundation Award recipients, created dishes inspired by their favorite TV shows and characters.

PHOTO BY FRANCIS SON

A MATTER OF TASTE Even before the first winner was announced at the **2016 James Beard Foundation Awards** May 2, the celebratory vibe was going strong in Chicago. That's par for the course when some 2,000 chefs, restaurateurs, mixologists and other culinary-industry folks from around the country are gathered in one city to honor their own. For the second year in a row, the prestigious awards and gala reception that followed were held at Lyric Opera of Chicago. Hosted by TV personality and chef Carla Hall, this year's theme celebrated the relationship between TV and food, and included celeb-chef presenters such as Andrew Zimmern, Rachael Ray and Chicago's Stephanie Izard, whose "bun in the oven" was duly noted by Hall. Chicago was also represented in the award-receiving department with Outstanding Restaurant Design (76 seats and over) going to Land and Sea Dept. for Cherry Circle Room, and Best Chef: Great Lakes to Grace's Curtis Duffy, who brought his adorable daughters onstage. The biggest local win went to Alinea for Outstanding Restaurant. Chef-partner Grant Achatz thanked his team for their "enormous level of trust" when it comes to his and partner Nick Kokonas' "core philosophy of taking risks and constantly innovating." But perhaps it was the Lifetime Achievement Award recipient, 93-year-old Leah Chase of Dooky Chase's Restaurant in New Orleans, who summed it up best: "I don't care if you're the pope or president; you have to eat." —Lisa Shames