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MAINE CHEF LEE SKAWINSKI TO BE FEATURED AT NEW YORK'S JAMES BEARD HOUSE FOR SEPTEMBER 17TH DINNER PRESENTATION EVENT

Portland, ME – Maine Chef Lee Skawinski, Co-owner of Portland, Maine's acclaimed Vignola and Cinque Terre restaurants, will present a seasonal, six-course dinner at New York City's prestigious James Beard House on Wednesday, September 17th at 7 pm. Reservations for the dinner are available after June 1 by calling the James Beard Foundation at (212) 627-2308.

The September 17th dinner will showcase Skawinski's adaptation of the flavorful, seasonal Italian *osteria* fare served at Vignola (www.vignolamaine.com), and marks the second James Beard Foundation dinner for Skawinski. In 2005, he presented a dinner to a capacity crowd at the New York food landmark, which showcased the Ligurian-influenced cuisine he has perfected at Cinque Terre (www.cinqueterremaine.com).

Plans for the September dinner are well underway to ensure that the evening runs like clockwork. The evening will differ from Skawinski's usual restaurant service in several ways, according to the chef. "We'll be cooking in a different kitchen, which means our layout and flow is different, and we'll obviously need to serve dining room guests all at the same time," Skawinski said. "It takes practice and preparation to make sure that events like our upcoming Beard House dinner are successes. We want guests that evening to be pleased by the entire dining experience."



Happy diners at Portland, Maine's popular eatery, "Vignola" (Kevin Brusie Photography)

Skawinski's cuisine has been showcased by the likes of *Gourmet*, *The New York Times* and Food Network. Additionally, Epicurious earlier this month featured Skawinski when it included Cinque Terre on its list of "Top 10 Farm-to-Table Restaurants in the U.S.A." It is the growing farm-to-table movement which most influences the fare coming out of Skawinski's kitchen. Many top-tier restaurants throughout the state purchase vegetables and produce from local Maine farms in season, but Skawinski takes that a step further: Vignola and Cinque Terre plant seeds and grow their own vegetables, greens and other all-natural produce at their own Grand View Farm in nearby Greene, Maine.

"Being able to use farm-fresh food means that our final dishes aren't just healthier, but they taste the way they're *supposed* to taste," he said. "The rest of the country is discovering what we've known in Maine for years – that you just can't beat the robust flavor, color and texture that come from all-natural, locally grown ingredients that haven't had to travel across the country in trucks."

Skawinski will practice and refine the menu for the September 17th Vignola dinner throughout the summer and into the fall, making sure that timing, preparation, and flavors are flawless. To finalize preparation and timing, Skawinski will host two dinners in Maine which will be open to the public, and which will feature the same menu to be presented at the Beard House dinner in New York.

These events will include the annual Cinque Terre/Vignola Harvest Dinner at Grand View Farm in Greene, Maine – scheduled this year for August 24th – and a special “Beard Dinner Preview” event, scheduled for September 9th at Vignola in Portland.

“This is a great way for us to share the Beard House dinner experience with our restaurant patrons,” Skawinski added. “Their feedback is always important to our whole team, so it’s great to be able to have an ‘advance run’ of our menu with our restaurant guests right here in Maine.”

Highlights of the menu include Summer Harvest Soup with Olive Oil Poached Lobster Panini; and, Stoneheart Farm Lamb, Broccoli Rabe, Sage White Beans and Red Wine Sauce.



Both dishes capture the seasonal spirit of Maine: the vegetables and greens in the dishes are grown at the restaurant’s Grand View Farm; Maine lobster has its own unique, sweet flavor; and Stoneheart Farm in South Paris, Maine, raises a breed of lamb developed in Maine in the 1950s and known for the excellent quality of its meat.

Vignola pastry chef Emily Delois will join Skawinski in New York, as will winemaker Carlo Nerozzi. Wines from Nerozzi’s La Vigne di San Pietro winery in Italy’s Veneto region will complement the menu. Additionally, Skawinski has chosen two award-winning Belgian-style beers from Maine’s Allagash Brewing Company to accompany the appetizers and Maine cheeses featured on the evening’s menu.

Details:

The James Beard House is located at 167 West 12th Street in New York City. Tickets for the September 17th dinner event are \$125 for James Beard Foundation members, and \$165 for the general public. For further information or reservations, call (212) 627-2308.

Photos:

To download photos of Chef Lee Skawinski and Vignola food and interiors, visit www.frontburnerpr.com/vignola.php.

Come discover why *The Washington Post*, *Food Arts*, *Wine & Spirits*, *Down East* and *The Portland Press Herald* all recommend Vignola as a Maine "Must-Dine" experience. For reservations at Vignola, call (207) 772-1330. www.vignolamaine.com

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