



Nora Pouillon Honored by James Beard Foundation

Nora Pouillon, the chef whose eponymous Washington restaurant paved the way for other chefs to cook with local, organic ingredients, will be honored with a James Beard Lifetime Achievement Award, the foundation announced Tuesday. She will accept the prize at the James Beard Awards on May 1 in Chicago.

“To get a Michelin star — for me, that would not be as much as getting this award,” said Pouillon.

The award is especially poignant because it reminded her of the time that James Beard himself dined at her restaurant in the early 1980s, a few years before the death of the prolific author, TV host and cooking teacher.

“James Beard was my big hero. He believed in local, seasonal food, and he cooked delicious food, but simple food, and that’s what I wanted to do,” she said. “He came to the restaurant — he had so much terrible gout, he came in his

slippers — and we sat at the bar.” There, she opened up to him about how difficult it was to get diners in her adopted country to understand her philosophy about food.

“I told him I was struggling with the Americans because I had to buy whole animals, and no one wants to eat liver or kidney,” she said. “He said, ‘Just keep on doing what you’re doing, and they’ll come around.’”

Austrian-born Pouillon, 73, moved to Washington in the 1960s with her French journalist husband and was shocked at the unhealthy food she saw here. She began a cooking school in her home, and opened Restaurant Nora in 1979. It was the first restaurant in the nation to be certified organic, inspiring a generation of chefs to source the best ingredients from farms with sustainable practices. She also became a female chef-owner in an era when they were scarce.

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highest paid play in the NFL and was known by his teammates to be an arrogant person who believed he didn't need anyone but himself. Then, before a game against the Giants in 1985, one of his coaches told him "Tonight your life is going to change Joe". This turned out to be a prophecy, because Theismann sustained a broken leg that ended his football career.

It was an emotional moment as Theismann apologized to his coach for his arrogant behavior and the audience gave him an ovation as he was put onto a stretcher and escorted off the field. With his NFL career in the rear view mirror, Theismann turned his drive and passion toward the food industry and for a time he was managing six restaurants in the DC metro area.

"It seemed like every step I took up the ladder of business, I took steps backward as a person," he said. "I'm not proud of what I became, but I recognize that's what I had become."

Believe in Who You are and Other Lessons Learned

During his talk, Mr. Theismann went over some lessons he learned over his decades of experience. His first word of advice was that if you don't believe in who you are, than no one will anticipate you and your product. He encouraged new business owners to educate themselves on the industry as he had to. He also encourage business owners to take some risks in creativity to set their business apart from other similar ventures.

The second lesson was that there is never a failure, but an educational experience that didn't quite work out.

"The only true way to fail is to stop trying," he said. "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care," he said.

The 2017 Mid-Atlantic Food, Beverage & Lodging Expo will take place on September 26-27 at the Maryland State Fairgrounds in Timonium. Learn more at midatlanticexpo.com.

ALEX COOPER is the director of membership and marketing for the Restaurant Association of Maryland.