The Second Annual Primo di New York

Kayla Pantano (June 23, 2017)

Attention, foodies! On Friday, June 23, a panel of food experts at the James Beard House will select the winner of this year's Primo di New York competition, i.e. the pasta dish you're going to have to try stat!

In a city swarming with world famous Italian restaurants and secret gems that are just as good (if not better, shh!), it's hard to narrow down a short-list of go-to spots when the options are endless. But imagine how much harder it is to choose one single pasta dish that trumps all—considering the average Italian menu features a bountiful variety, often in overwhelming numbers. Fortunately, this evening will reveal the champion.

On Friday, June 23, an international jury of Italian and American food experts at the historic James Beard House [2] will award the Primo di New York—the first competition to recognize New York's best pasta dish, organized by Italian pasta company Pastificio di Martino [3] in collaboration with the James Beard Foundation [4]. This special prize celebrates Italian culture and gastronomy, emphasizing pasta as a staple of Mediterranean cuisine and tradition.

From the birthplace of pasta (Italy...duh!), the judging panel includes, Giuseppe di Martino (Founder of Pasta di Martino [3] and President of the Gragnano Consortium [5]), Albert Sapere and Barbara Guerra (Founders of Le Strade della Mozzarella [6]), and Italian food writers Faith Willinger [7], Eleonora Cozzella [8], and Luciano Pignataro [9]. The American judges include the likes Mitchell Davis [10] (Executive Vice President of the James Beard Foundation), Colu Henry [11] (Author of Back Pocket Pasta [12]), and Sierra Tishgart [13] (Senior Editor at Grub Street [14]).

Selected from dozens of submissions, the talented ten finalists are as follows: chef Rita Sodi (I Sodi [15]); Garrison Price (Il Buco Alimentari & Vineria [16]); chef Jarred Sippel (Italienne [17]); chef David de Lucia (Casa Lever [18]); restaurateur Ed Schoenfeld (Red Farm [19]); chef Silvia Barban (LaRina [20]); chef Matteo Limoli (MAMO [21]); chef Joshua Pinksy (Momofuku Nishi [22]); chef Raffaele Solinas (Maiella LIC [23]); and chef Hillary Sterling of Vic's [24].

These lucky ten are set to cook for the judges at the James Beard House tonight. Once the experts come to a verdict there will be a private pasta dinner in honor of the winner prepared by Primo di New York's 2016 champion, Michelin-starred chef Massimo Sola [25] of MAMO.

In addition to the dinner, the victor will be awarded $5,000 and a trip to Gragnano, Italy, known as The City of Pasta [26], to explore the history of Gragnano's pasta-making and participate in Le Strade della Mozzarella [6], a conference celebrating Italian food and excellence.

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