

Contact: Mariam Parker, Executive Director, AFWA
Mariam@austinfoodwinealliance.org, 512.348.6847
Courtney Knittel, Giant Noise Public Relations
Courtney@giantnoise.com, 512.382.9017



AUSTIN FOOD & WINE ALLIANCE ANNOUNCES CELEBRITY CHEF LINEUP FOR 2018 WINE & DINE SERIES PRESENTED BY WHOLE FOODS MARKET

Nationally Acclaimed Chefs Matt Jennings, Hugh Acheson, Alon Shaya, and Lidia Bastianich Come to Austin to Support Austin's Culinary Community

AUSTIN, TX (May 15, 2018) – Austin food lovers will have the opportunity to be “wined and dined” by several of the nation’s most highly acclaimed chefs as the Austin Food & Wine Alliance (AFWA) announces the return of its popular curated dinners with the 2018 Wine & Dine Series presented by Whole Foods Market.

The collection of exclusive dinners features culinary celebrities **Matt Jennings, Hugh Acheson, Alon Shaya,** and **Lidia Bastianich** paired with Austin’s top culinary talent. Dinners will be held June through November, and money raised will benefit the AFWA’s Culinary Grant Program.

“We are extremely excited and honored by the support of these nationally renowned chefs and their interest in celebrating Austin’s culinary community,” said Mariam Parker, executive director of the Austin Food & Wine Alliance. “Their interest in supporting the Alliance is a great endorsement of Austin’s dynamic food scene.”

In the unique dinner format, attendees get the opportunity to hear from the chef about his/her culinary philosophy and inspiration and enjoy specially designed menus paired with top-tier wines and spirits that showcase Austin’s best restaurants. Chefs who have previously been featured in the Wine & Dine dinners include nationally acclaimed celebrities **Jacques Pepin** and **Emeril Lagasse**, along with Austin-based chefs **Rene Ortiz** and **David Bull** – all highly awarded chefs.

“This is truly an extraordinary lineup of culinary talent,” said Tara Treffry, culinary director of Whole Foods Market Southwest Region. “We are thrilled to continue to partner with the Austin Food & Wine

Alliance in raising the culinary profile of our city while also raising money to support the AFWA grant program.”

This one-of-a-kind series kicks off on June 28 with Chef Matt Jennings of Boston’s The Townsman at Olamaie in collaboration with Chef Michael Fojtasek, James Beard Award finalist in 2018. Olamaie was named the *Austin American-Statesman’s* Best Restaurant in 2017.

With four James Beard Award nominations for Best Chef: Northeast and a spot on *Food & Wine’s* 40 Big Food Thinkers 40 and Under list, Jennings is recognized as a culinary innovator known for unexpected uses of traditional northern ingredients. An autographed copy of his debut cookbook, *Homegrown: Cooking from My New England Roots*, will be gifted to each ticketed guest.

The second Wine & Dine dinner will take place on July 30 at Emmer & Rye with Chef Hugh Acheson, chef-owner of the acclaimed restaurants Five & Ten and The National, both in Athens, GA, and Empire State South, Achie’s, and Spiller Park Coffee, all in Atlanta. Acheson is the winner of two James Beard Awards for Best Chef: Southeast and Best American Cookbook in 2012. He has competed on Bravo’s *Top Chef Masters* and was a judge on the hit show *Top Chef*.

Acheson will collaborate with Emmer & Rye Chef and Owner Kevin Fink, 2018 James Beard Award semi-finalist and the recipient of *Food & Wine’s* Best New Chefs (2016). Fink’s restaurant was named *Bon Appétit’s* Best New Restaurant (2016).

Alon Shaya, chef-owner of the acclaimed Shaya and Saba in New Orleans will also join Fink at Emmer & Rye for the third Wine & Dine dinner on September 10. The Israeli chef has been nominated for five James Beard Awards and in 2015, was named by the James Beard Foundation as Best Chef: South and a year later, his namesake restaurant, Shaya, was hailed as the Best New Restaurant in the country. He recently penned his first memoir/cookbook, *Shaya: An Odyssey of Food, My Journey Back to Israel*, a signed copy of which will be gifted to each guest.

The final dinner in the 2018 Wine & Dine series will be November 8 at L’Oca d’Oro featuring the legendary chef, author, and television personality Lidia Bastianich. Bastianich is a serial restaurateur known for Nonna in Italy, Felidia on Manhattan’s Upper East Side, and the massively popular Eataly (Chicago/NYC), among others. In her multi-decade career, Bastianich has racked up several James Beard Awards, authored multiple books, and hosted a number of television shows, including *Lidia’s Italian-American Kitchen*, *Lidia’s Family Table*, and *Lidia’s Italy*. She will join L’Oca d’Oro Chef Fiore Tedesco, one of StarChef’s Rising Star Austin award winners who brings his Italian family traditions, experience, and vision of gracious hospitality to life at his restaurant.

Tickets for the 2018 Wine & Dine series will be available on the AFWA [website](#) starting May 15. Tickets are limited and pricing is as follows:

Matt Jennings at Olamaie, June 28: \$225 per person

Includes dinner + an autographed copy of *Homegrown: Cooking from My New England Roots*

Hugh Acheson at Emmer & Rye, July 30: \$250 per person

Alon Shaya at Emmer & Rye, September 10: \$250 per person

Includes dinner + an autographed copy of *Shaya: An Odyssey of Food, My Journey Back to Israel*

Lidia Bastianich; Loca d'Oro; November 8: \$350 per person

Includes dinner + an autographed copy of *My American Dream: A Life of Love, Family, and Food*

For more information about the AFWA, visit AustinFoodWineAlliance.org, call 512.348.6847, or email Info@AustinFoodWineAlliance.org. Stay up to date with Austin Food & Wine Alliance happenings on Facebook <http://facebook.com/austinfoodwinealliance> and Twitter <http://twitter.com/ATXFoodWineAlly>.

####

ABOUT THE AUSTIN FOOD AND WINE ALLIANCE

The Austin Food & Wine Alliance is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to fostering awareness and innovation in the Central Texas culinary community through grants, educational programming, and events. Guided by an all-volunteer board of directors and committees made up of culinary- and community-minded professionals, the Alliance's commitment is to promote Texas food, wine, spirits, and craft brews and to increase appreciation of Texas' culinary impact. The AFWA is the designated beneficiary of the [Austin FOOD & WINE Festival](#). For more information about the Austin Food & Wine Alliance, visit AustinFoodWineAlliance.org.