

CUISINE

Chefs headed to James Beard House to showcase local flavors


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"I'll do a succulent miso belly as the first element," he says, "a second of saltimbocca tenderloin mint marigold and pig confit from the pork shoulder. All will be on one plate."

For his pre-dinner canape, he plans a savory cone filled with mascarpone and pork rilette.

"I'm really excited to work with this group of chefs," Mr. Johnson says. "It's a true veteran chefs' crew."

The Loves will create a pre-dessert that "will probably be something tropical with mangoes and coconut," Mr. Love says. "Something light and refreshing. Then it will be all about chocolate for dessert."

While most of us won't be able to attend the dinner in New York, the chefs think they will re-create the meal locally afterward, most likely as a fundraiser for a local charity and will be able to show video of the New York event.

Tickets for the Beard dinner are expected to go on sale Aug. 1. Details and reservations are at jamesbeard.org.

Five of the region's top chefs will team up to create a dinner showcasing Southwest Florida flavors at the prestigious James Beard House this fall.

Norman Love, the acclaimed chocolatier, pastry chef and founder of Norman Love Confections, has put together the all-star team that will present the dinner in New York City on Friday, Oct. 2.

Joining him will be: Fabrizio Aielli, chef/owner of Sea Salt in Naples and St. Petersburg; Harold Balink, chef/owner of Cru in Fort Myers; George Fistovich, executive chef of The Ritz-Carlton Resorts of Naples; and Todd Johnson, chef/owner of Rumrunners in Cape Coral. Ryan Love, an up-and-coming pastry chef who works at Norman Love Confections, will join his father to create the desserts.

"The menu will feature ingredients that are indigenous to Southwest Florida," says Mr. Love. "I reached out to these chefs who are long-time friends and accomplished chefs. Everyone is really excited about doing it."

The not-for-profit James Beard Foundation maintains the Greenwich Village property that was home to the famed cookbook author and educator. Today, it is used for culinary events with chefs from around the world vying to create a meal for 80 people in this performance space. The foundation's mission is to "celebrate, nurture and honor America's culinary heritage."

While menu details aren't all worked out, Mr. Johnson knows what he is doing: He's presenting three variations on red wattle pig raised at Rosy Tomorrows Heritage Farm, run by Rose O'Dell King in North Fort Myers.