

For Immediate Release

## Internationally acclaimed Chef Mike Lata to receive Spoleto's 2023 Mary Ramsay Civic Award

Honoring philanthropy, service, and community stewardship

*A luncheon, sponsored by SouthState Bank, will be held March 31 at the Governor Thomas Bennett House*

**March 22, 2023 (Charleston, SC)** — On March 31, Spoleto Festival USA will present its Mary Ramsay Civic Award to acclaimed chef and industry leader Mike Lata for his outstanding contributions to Spoleto and the Charleston area. A James Beard Award winner, Lata is the co-owner and chef of FIG and The Ordinary, two concepts which remain at the zenith of culinary dining experiences.

“As Spoleto continues to inform Charleston’s cultural identity, drawing some of the world’s most innovative minds to the region, Mike Lata has shaped Charleston’s culinary character,” says Spoleto Festival USA Board Chair Alicia Gregory. “His extraordinary artistry and innovation have propelled our city to achieve international recognition as a top culinary destination.”

Adds Spoleto Festival USA General Director & CEO Mena Mark Hanna: “Over the years, Mike Lata has contributed both time and resources to further Spoleto’s mission, helping to raise more than \$350,000 in support of the Spoleto Festival USA Orchestra. We are grateful for his championship of the Festival—as well as his staunch commitment to support Charleston’s rich, local ecosystem of farmers and fishermen. Beyond our 17 days, Lata’s work feeds the Lowcountry.”

Recognizing extraordinary contributions of civic and charitable leadership within the Charleston community, the Mary Ramsay Civic Award was established in 2012. It is named after Mary Croghan Ramsay (1921–2009), who worked tirelessly to elevate causes including the performing arts, urban development and improvement, higher education, and human welfare. The award celebrates her commitment to improving the Lowcountry and seeks to

honor others who follow in her path. Past recipients include John Hagerty (2020), Sallie M. Duell, Susan W. Ravenel, and Kathleen Rivers (2019); Wayland H. and Marion Rivers Cato (2018); Joseph H. and Evelyn McGee (2017); Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr. (2016); Martha Rivers Ingram (2015); Dr. Raymond S. Greenberg (2014); Charles S. Way, Jr. (2013); and John and Norma Palms (2012).

The award luncheon, sponsored by SouthState Bank, will take place March 31 at the Governor Thomas Bennett House. Wine distributor and entrepreneur Harry Root will lead the afternoon's invocation. Spoleto Festival USA Board Chair Alicia Gregory will make remarks, followed by the award presentation by hospitality industry leader and philanthropist Mickey Bakst. A limited number of tickets to the luncheon (starting at \$300 each) are available and may be purchased by calling 843.720.1114.

---

#### MIKE LATA

Mike Lata is Chef/Co-Owner of FIG and The Ordinary in Charleston, South Carolina. He received the James Beard Foundation Award for Best Chef: Southeast in 2009 and was a semifinalist for Outstanding Chef in 2017 and 2018. The restaurants have also received their own accolades: FIG won JBF Outstanding Wine Program in 2018 and was nominated for Outstanding Restaurant in 2019 and 2020. The Ordinary was a JBF finalist for Best New Restaurant in 2013.

A native of Western Massachusetts, Lata started his culinary career at an early age, working in kitchens in Boston, Martha's Vineyard, New Orleans, Atlanta, and France before landing in Charleston in 1998. As a hands-on, self-taught chef, he is relentless in his pursuit of the freshest products—they define his work and his mission to create bright, satisfying food that is uncomplicated and elegant, paying respect to Lowcountry traditions. His longstanding and outspoken commitment to support local farmers and fishermen has cemented his position as a champion of Charleston's flourishing culinary renaissance.

Lata's food, philosophy, and contributions to the Charleston community have earned him national recognition, receiving accolades from *The Wall Street Journal*, *Food & Wine*, *Bon Appétit*, *Esquire*, *Garden & Gun*, *Southern Living*, *Travel + Leisure*, *USA Today*, *The New York Times*, and more. He has made several television appearances, including Food Network's *Iron Chef America*, Bravo's *Top Chef*, PBS's *Moveable Feast with Fine Cooking*, *The Today Show*, and ABC's *Nightline Platelist*, which described his food as "so good it will buckle your knees."

#### SPOLETO FESTIVAL USA

Spoleto Festival USA was founded in 1977 by Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Gian Carlo Menotti, who sought to create an American counterpart to the annual Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto, Italy, that he had founded in 1958. Now in its 47th year, Spoleto Festival USA is internationally recognized as America's premier performing arts festival. For 17 days and nights each spring, Spoleto Festival USA fills Charleston's historic theaters, churches, and outdoor spaces with performances in opera; theater; dance; and chamber, symphonic, choral, and jazz music. Spoleto's mission is to present programs of the highest artistic caliber while maintaining a dedication to young artists, a commitment to all forms of the performing arts, a passion for contemporary innovation, and an enthusiasm for providing unique performance opportunities for established artists. Beyond its role as a launching pad for young

talent, Spoleto also serves as a catalyst for cultural change and has aided in Charleston's flourishing as a top arts and culture destination. With General Director & CEO Mena Mark Hanna at its helm, the 2023 season takes place May 26 to June 11 in various locations on the downtown peninsula. Spoleto Festival USA is a 501 (c)(3) charitable organization.

**IMAGES:** A selection of high-resolution images can be found in the online gallery.

**MORE:** Visit the [virtual press room](#).