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Title:	Honoring and Commending South Philly Barbacoa's Cristina Martínez and Royal Izakaya's Jesse Ito for their first-time nominations for James Beard Foundation Awards.				
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3/28/2019	0	CITY COUNCIL			
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Honoring and Commending South Philly Barbacoa's Cristina Martínez and Royal Izakaya's Jesse Ito for their first-time nominations for James Beard Foundation Awards.

WHEREAS, The James Beard Foundation's mission is to honor, celebrate, and nurture chefs who are pushing the boundaries of food culture in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Each year, the James Beard Foundation Awards recognize select chefs and restaurateurs for their inspiring and innovative culinary work. The Foundation also honors writers, journalists, and documentarians whose work explores how gastronomy drives cultural development and policy change. The awards, founded in 1990, are widely regarded as the "Oscars of the food world"; and

WHEREAS, The story of South Philly Barbacoa Chef Cristina Martínez, a finalist in this year's Best Chef: Mid-Atlantic category, is one that speaks to Philadelphia's heart. Martínez fled her hometown of Capulhuac, Mexico - widely known as the "capital" of *barbacoa*- to seek economic opportunity to provide for her daughter's schooling. After making her way to Philadelphia and meeting husband Benjamin Miller, she dedicated herself to perfecting the culinary tradition of *barbacoa*, bringing flame-cooked, succulent lamb tacos with pancita and consomé to day laborers and migrant workers as a reminder of home, and eventually to Philadelphia residents and travelers from around the world; and

WHEREAS, Martínez has also emerged as a fierce activist for immigrant justice in the City of Philadelphia. She is a staunch advocate for advancing the rights of undocumented restaurant workers, and together with Miller and others championed Council Resolution No. 170416, which recognized every person's fundamental right to earn a living, regardless of immigration status, and affirmed the City of Philadelphia's commitment to protect and secure a safe and dignified workplace for all. Her inspiring story was most recently featured on Season 5 of Netflix's *Chef's Table*; and

WHEREAS, The story of Royal Izakaya's Jessie Ito is similarly one of attaining culinary perfection in

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Philadelphia through an immigrant journey. Ito's father, Masaharu, moved from Japan to South Jersey in his early 20's and eventually opened his own sushi restaurant, Fuji, in Haddonfield. His son, who worked as a dishwasher and prep cooking before joining his father behind the sushi bar at age 17, was determined to take his father's craft even further. In 2016, Jessie Ito opened Royal Sushi & Izakaya, a restaurant that features a world-class sushi bar that showcases cross-generational, masterful technique; and

WHEREAS, Ito's artistry, exhibited during Royal Izakaya's 18-stage omakase experience, has landed him a position as a finalist for the 2019 Rising Star Chef of the Year Award, which recognizes pioneering chefs under 30 who will "make a significant impact on the industry for years to come"; and

WHEREAS, Martínez's and Ito's status as James Beard finalists is extraordinary. Both chefs have mastered awe-inspiring culinary skills and techniques that they learned at a young age from their fathers. Both South Philly Barbacoa and Royal Izakaya feature dining experiences that remind us that a chef's passion for careful, meticulous preparation of food can not only reach the highest levels of culinary excellence but can also tell stories of courage, tradition, family, and resilience; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia has made its mark on the James Beard Awards. In 2017, Michael Solomon was named "Outstanding Chef," Stephen Starr was named "Outstanding Restaurateur," and Greg Vernick was awarded "Best Chef" in the mid-Atlantic region. In 2018, Camille Cogswell of Zahav was named "Rising Star Chef of the Year"; and

WHEREAS, This year, Philadelphia is once again well represented amongst James Beard Award finalists, with Marc Vetri (Vetri Cucina), Ellen Yin (Fork, High Street on Market), Rich Landau (Vedge), joining Martínez and Ito as finalists. Zahav is also a finalist in the "Outstanding Restaurant" category; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Honors and commends South Philly Barbacoa's Cristina Martínez and Royal Izakaya's Jesse Ito for their first-time nominations for James Beard Foundation Awards.

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