



DIRT TO GLASS

SOLD-OUT JAMES BEARD DINNER SPOTLIGHTS GROWING DEMAND FOR MICHIGAN WINES

Landmark event affirms growing appetite to celebrate, understand, and elevate the state's thriving wine industry

GROSSE POINTE FARMS,
Mich.

More than 250 Metro Detroiters gathered at the Country Club of Detroit on Friday, May 30, to experience the James Beard Foundation's Michigan Dinner of the Decade. The event, which also raised scholarship funds for culinary students, honored the legacy of acclaimed American chef James Beard and celebrated the future of Michigan's food and wine scene by featuring vintages made exclusively in the Great Lakes State, a nod to the growing popularity of Michigan's \$6 billion industry.

The exclusive focus on Michigan wines marked a first for a James Beard Foundation event and a milestone for the state's wine industry. Known for setting the national standard in culinary excellence, the Foundation's decision signaled long-overdue recognition for Michigan vintners and growers, who have spent decades working to elevate the state's profile on the national and global stage.

"This was a proud moment for everyone who has worked to elevate Michigan wine," said Amanda Danielson, a Traverse City-based advanced sommelier and restaurateur who helped plan the James Beard Foundation event. "We've known the quality is there. To see it showcased on this kind of platform is incredibly validating."

Danielson was joined by Madeline Triffon, America's first female master sommelier, often referred to as "Detroit's First Lady of Wine." Triffon suggested the event feature Michigan wines exclusively and the duo recruited Taylor Johnson, executive beverage director and sommelier at Echelon Kitchen + Bar to help curate the evening's wine list through a blind tasting of more than 100 submissions from across the state. Of the more than 100 wines tasted, four were selected to accompany the seated dinner and another 45 were featured on the 'Best of Michigan' wines bars. Several winemakers came to the event to pour their own wines as well as those of colleagues.

Kasey Wierzba, executive winemaker and general manager of Shady Lane Cellars in Suttons Bay, came down from northern Michigan for the event.



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“The wine quality has reached an apex where the wines speak for themselves and the foundation dinner was an extraordinary backdrop for this. The energy was palpable, and guests were awed by the quality and complexity of the wines. Many of the wines featured were from limited batches or available only to wine club members, Dinner of the Decade changed that. Having trusted sommeliers curate the list and be on hand to talk with guests about the wine, terroir, and Michigan’s growing regions only added to the enthusiasm among attendees,” said Wierzba.

The ticketed event sold out in just three days, generating momentum that Danielson hopes will carry into the fourth annual Dirt to Glass™ Conference, which she founded in 2021 to empower growers and elevate Michigan’s wine industry. This year’s conference, set for August 21 and 22 in Traverse City, will feature The Company We Keep, a walk-around tasting showcasing 100 exceptional wines from Michigan and around the world. A limited number of VIP tickets remain, offering early access and exclusive pours of rare Michigan wines, including library selections and small-batch bottlings no longer available to the public.

“This tasting is both a celebration and a statement,” Danielson said. “We’re not asking if Michigan belongs, we’re showing you that it does.”

The conference will bring together vineyards, winemakers, restaurateurs, wholesalers, and exporters for two days of collaboration and industry dialogue. Alongside tastings, Dirt to Glass includes seminars, workshops, and stakeholder-led conversations focused on advancing the quality, sustainability, and global competitiveness of Michigan wine.

“The James Beard dinner was a turning point,” Danielson added. “It showcased the caliber of wines being produced in Michigan and the growing interest among consumers to support and understand their local wine industry. I believe we gained some new champions that night, and I hope to see many of them again at Dirt to Glass in August.”

ABOUT DIRT TO GLASS CONFERENCE

Founded in 2021, the Dirt to Glass Conference is a collaborative, statewide wine industry gathering focused on elevating the Michigan wine value chain. The event includes educational programming, field visits throughout the Old Mission and Leelanau peninsulas and cross-sector discussions to promote excellence in viticulture, winemaking, sustainability and business development.

Registration is currently open for the Dirt To Glass conference, and sponsorship opportunities are still available. Visit <https://www.canr.msu.edu/dirttoglass/>