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*Enhancing the quality of life for all we serve*

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## **National Restaurant Association Announces Operator Innovations Awards Finalists**

*Winners to be revealed during NRA Show 2012's inaugural "Destination: Celebration" event*

(Chicago) An independent panel of judges has selected the finalists for the National Restaurant Association's inaugural Operator Innovations Awards. Three finalists in each of five categories - Sustainability, Technology, Food Safety, Health & Nutrition, and Menu Development - will be brought to Chicago for the Association's [2012 Restaurant, Hotel-Motel Show](#) this May. The winners in each category, plus an Innovator of the Year selected from all finalists, will be announced live during Destination: Celebration on Saturday, May 5.

"The Operator Innovations Awards is designed to celebrate and encourage continued advancement in the restaurant industry, while shining a spotlight on industry-leading innovators who inspire other restaurant operators to new heights," said Jack Crawford, Convention Chair for NRA Show 2012 and President and CEO of Ground Round Independent Owners Cooperative, LLC. "This first year's operator finalists are driving innovation and excellence in execution, fueling customer satisfaction and profitability."

The 2012 Operator Innovations Awards finalists are:

### ***Sustainability***

**Evelyn Hill, Inc. (Liberty Island) – Five million visitors and close to zero waste.** While serving five million visitors to the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island, its operator, Evelyn Hill, Inc., has applied continuous innovations since 2000 that reduce waste and conserve water and energy. 94% of waste is now recycled or composted, and their new 7,000square foot pavilion is LEED Platinum certified.

**Starbucks Coffee – Create end-markets for selected foodservice packaging.** Starbucks is using its scale and brand presence to drive wholesale industry changes that benefit all restaurant and retail operators. Recycling of single-serve coated cups was extremely limited until Starbucks engaged all components of the value chain to begin making recycling practical and profitable. The company's goal is that all of its cups, and all of the foodservice industry's polycoated paper cups, will be recyclable by 2015.

**Uncommon Ground – Organic rooftop farming in an urban setting.** Uncommon Ground installed the country's first certified organic rooftop farm at its Edgewater location in 2008 and is preparing to add a second to the Wrigleyville location, where a sidewalk farm is already growing. Both four-star certified green restaurants offer urban agriculture internships focused on farming, beekeeping and sustainable food systems.

## **Technology**

**HMS Host (Airport Terminals) – Meal delivery at the departure gate.** Travelers at airport terminals can now order and pay for meals from select locations using airport restaurateur HMSHost's free mobile app, B4 YOU BOARD. Meals—everything from appetizers to entrees—are delivered directly to passengers within 20 minutes of departure. B4 YOU Board is currently available in the following airports: JFK, O'Hare, Minneapolis/St. Paul, and expanding soon to Sacramento, Phoenix and Los Angeles.

**SMART Restaurant Group (Which Wich) – On-demand, real-time training.** To address training/operational needs determined through guest surveys, SMART Restaurant Group has created an integrated technology solution featuring training videos that can be accessed thru QR codes at appropriate workstations for employees and managers in their Which Wich locations. Smart phones are used to connect through the QR codes and offer 30-60 second "refresher" videos to improve performance.

**Stacked Restaurants, LLC (California Casual) – Facilitating "build-your-own" ordering.** Stacked Restaurants is a new, full-service concept which utilizes an iPad-based ordering system, enabling guests to control when they order and when they pay, and to customize their meal in a comfortable, uninhibited way. Guests can choose from hundreds of ingredients in customizing their burgers, pizzas, salads and mac 'n' cheese, as they place and pay for orders via tabletop iPads.

## **Food Safety**

**Colorado Springs School District 11 – Comprehensive management of food ingredients including allergens.** This public-school system adapted and implemented the "Allerschool" system, designed to identify individual food ingredients, including all types of allergens in school menu items. This system reduces the likelihood of allergen exposure by minimizing manual ingredient checking, and it increases student safety and ingredient transparency among parents, administrators, students and the kitchen staff.

**Sodexo North America – Food safety system that meets strict ISO standards.** Sodexo is dedicated to ensuring safe, high quality products and services for all the people they serve. This onsite management firm achieved an industry milestone by obtaining ISO 22000:2005 Food Safety Management System certification for its operations in the US and Canada. This ISO standard requires proof of an organizations ability to plan, implement, operate, maintain and update a food safety management system aimed at providing food that is safe for the consumer.

**Waffle House – A public-private partnership to secure foodservice safety post-disasters.** This restaurant chain, in partnership with state health departments, developed a comprehensive business continuity plan featuring tight food safety protocols to ensure speedy and safe reopening after natural disasters. In addition, Waffle House works closely with FEMA and state emergency management agencies as an active Private Sector Partner when responding to natural disasters.

## **Health and Nutrition**

**Chartwells Higher Education Dining Services – Making healthier eating cool on campus.** "Balanced U" is Chartwells' nationwide program developed to educate and encourage students to eat healthier. Not only does Balanced U include made without gluten recipes, menus and labeling, but the program also includes a strong education component for students and employees alike, featuring nutritional labeling information, events and classes, and more.

**Sodexo School Services (Did You Know Café) – Cafeteria-as-classroom encourages healthier eating.** Targeting the finicky tween demographic, Sodexo transforms dining areas into extensions of the classroom to educate students on healthier eating with the goal of instilling lifelong healthy eating habits.

**UCSF Medical Center – Clear and comprehensive communication around healthy options.** This academic medical center takes an integrated approach to incorporating nutrition information, education and marketing in its restaurant settings. UCSF offers complete nutrition info in multiple ways including on digital menu boards and the customer’s receipt.

### ***Menu Development***

**Sodexo School Services (Future Chefs) – Culinary competition engages students across the country.** The annual Future Chefs National Competition challenges students to create and prepare healthy recipes in local competitions. 12 recipes per year are chosen to be featured on school lunch menus around the country, and this “For Kids, By Kids” approach has proven to be a great way to increase participation and get kids to try new things.

**The Cheesecake Factory, Inc. – Stylized Small-Plates Menu.** One of the early innovators in the space of smaller portions, Cheesecake Factory took the creative lead to develop a whole new array of stylized culinary creations that counter balanced the large portions for which it is well known. Premium plates are available in a range of prices and featured distinctly in menus.

**UNC Healthcare (Chapel Hill) – Restaurant- Retail Foods Delivered to Patients.** UNC Healthcare’s unique approach to foodservice is centered around 13 self branded dining concepts “restaurants” modeled after popular commercial restaurants. Each day, UNC’s 800 patients can order from a 20 page menu with greater than 80 entrée selections and have the restaurant choices delivered to their room. Patients experience greater variety at a lower labor cost than that of traditional hospital food service.

Held at Chicago’s Harris Theater Rooftop Terrace in Millennium Park, Destination: Celebration is this year’s must-attend NRA Show -party. In addition to celebrities and industry thought leaders, guests will be treated to music by accomplished solo artist Kenny Loggins. Destination: Celebration will be held on Saturday, May 5, 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. Tickets can be purchased online for \$125 each, or packs of ten tickets for \$1,000. Space is limited, and tickets are sold on a first-come, first-served basis.

The judges’ panel for the Operator Innovations Awards represents the major segments of the foodservice industry. All nominations are reviewed by the panel of industry leaders consisting of **Patricia Bando** (Associate Vice President, Auxiliary Services, Boston College), **Scott Barton** (President, Fine Dining Division, Lettuce Entertain You), **Jeff Broadhurst** (President & CEO, Eat’n Park Hospitality Group), **Marc Buehler** (President, O’Charleys), **Jean-Marie Clement** (Director, Global Food & Beverage Line of Business, Walt Disney Parks and Resorts Worldwide), **Douglas Davis** (Director, Global Food Safety, Marriott International), **Chris Demery** (Vice President, Applications, OSI Restaurant Partners, LLC), **James Houser** (Vice President of Administration, Delaware North), **John Metz, Jr.** (Executive Chef, President and Co-Founder, Sterling Hospitality), **Christopher Pappas** (CEO, Pappas Restaurants, Inc.), **C.W. Craig Reed** (Director of Food & Beverage, Broadmoor Hotel), and **Ron Serluco** (Senior Vice President of Operators, Guckenheimer).

The annual National Restaurant Association Restaurant, Hotel-Motel Show is the largest single gathering of restaurant, foodservice and lodging professionals. NRA Show 2012 will be held at its new dates May 5-8, at McCormick Place in Chicago. The event attracts 58,000-plus attendees and visitors from all 50 states and 100-plus countries, and showcases the latest products, services, innovative ideas, up-to-the-minute information about trends and issues and other growth opportunities than any other industry event. For more information, visit the Show website at [www.restaurant.org/show](http://www.restaurant.org/show), and find the NRA Show on Twitter [@NRAShow](https://twitter.com/NRAShow), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/NRAShow), [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/NRAShow) and its widely read blog [Floored!](http://www.floored.com)

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