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31 Uchi, Uchiko garner 4 Beard nominations

Share By Mike Sutter | Thursday, February 17, 2011, 01:52 PM

Austin's **Uchi** restaurant empire scored four high-profile nominations Thursday for 2011 **James Beard Foundation Awards**.

Among the national group's semifinalists are **Uchiko** for best new restaurant, Uchiko chef **Paul Qui** for best new chef, executive chef and owner **Tyson Cole** of Uchi and Uchiko for best chef in the Southwest region and **Philip Speer**, who creates desserts for both restaurants, as best pastry chef.

Cole has been nominated for the award three other times. This is Speer's second consecutive nomination.

Tito Beveridge of Tito's Handmade Vodka in Austin was named a semifinalist as outstanding wine and spirits professional.

Award semifinalists with Austin ties include:

- Robert Del Grande (outstanding chef), the Houston chef whose concepts include Cafe Express and Soleil in Austin.
- Bruce Bromberg and Eric Bromberg of Blue Ribbon Restaurants in New York (outstanding restaurateur). Items from the Blue Ribbon menu were recently added at the Renaissance Austin Hotel.
- Steve Eells of Chipotle Mexican Grill (outstanding restaurateur), which has more than 15 Austin locations.
- Sam Fox of Fox Restaurant Concepts (outstanding restaurateur), whose holdings include North at the Domain.

The New York-based foundation, which promotes culinary achievement among chefs, restaurants and food journalists, will announce finalists March 12, with the winners announced May 9.

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Forklore

All other forms of entertainment considered, going out to eat is the one ticket everybody buys, whether it's fast-food cheap seats, big-steak luxury boxes or the chicken-fried arena seating in-between. Let American-Statesman and austin360.com restaurant critic **Mike Sutter** be your all-access guide to the Central Texas dining-out scene.

In more than two decades at the Statesman, Mike's been a copy editor, Sunday editor, Page 1 designer and, for the past 14 years, XL art director. But after more than 700 XL covers, nine XL Dining Guides, managing the hundreds of listings in our restaurant database and writing stories about doughnuts, Vietnam and the Incredible Hulk, he'll finally be able to put his nine years of fancy restaurant job experience (thank you, drive through) to good use. This means he can write about trailer tacos on South Lamar, \$250 anniversary dinners at Hudson's, smoking a cigar with Michael Moriarty at Louie's 106, brewing his own Anderson's Coffee stout beer and freeloading at kids-eat-free nights all over town.



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