The Guide

A Theatergoer’s Resource

Provided by the Education & Community Programs department at Portland Center Stage. Edited by Kira Batcheller and Kelsey Tyler.

I Love to Eat
By James Still
Directed by Jessica Kubzansky

Table of Contents

James Beard’s Bio ........................................... 2
The People .................................................. 3
The Food ..................................................... 4
The Music ..................................................... 5
Cartoon Recipe ............................................. 6
Portland’s Food Evolution ................................. 7
Local Connections ......................................... 8

Education & Community Programs Staff

Kelsey Tyler
Education & Community Programs Director

Sarah Mitchell
Education & Community Programs Manager

Matthew B. Zrebski
Resident Teaching Artist

Kira Batcheller - Intern

PCS’s 2012/13 Education & Community Programs are generously supported by:

Macy’s
Evelyn Crowell
Rick & Sue Horn Caskey
Michael E. Menashe
Portland born and world famous, “The Father of American Cooking” James Andrew Beard (1903-1985) was an American chef, television personality, and author of over 20 cookbooks. A die-hard epicurean, Beard’s influence in the culinary world remains to this day, inspiring future generations to enjoy food as much as he did.

Born May 5, 1903, James Beard was named after his father, James Beard, a Customs worker at the Portland Docks. His mother, Elizabeth Beard operated a boarding hotel known as the Gladstone. Together with his half-sister Lucille, Beard grew up at 2322 Salmon Street in a house always bustling with activity and more importantly, food. Taking advantage of a bountiful locale, Elizabeth Beard and her Chinese cook, Let, experimented in the kitchen on an almost daily basis, trying new ingredients and recipes from all over Portland. This was one of Beard’s earliest memories of food and he used the phrase ‘taste memory’ often in his memoir to describe favorite dishes from his childhood. During the summers, the family vacationed at the Gearhart Hotel in Seaside, Oregon and Beard counted the taste of seafood prepared fresh from the day’s catch among his fondest childhood memories.

A love of music (fostered by his mother) grew throughout his high school years and he became involved in many drama productions, a passion that carried through to his college career. Intermittent trips to San Francisco only increased his love affair with the opera and food, a love that would follow him his entire life. After Beard graduated from Washington High School, he went on to attend Reed College for six months before being expelled; the reason given at the time was poor grades, but the decision was later revealed to have been a reaction to Beard’s open homosexuality. The college later issued a public apology and Beard was awarded a degree in 1976.

No longer wishing to remain in the Northwest, Beard traveled to Europe where he studied voice lessons, focusing on his love for the theatre. It was while in Europe that Beard fell in love with French cuisine, which only served to strengthen his lifelong passion for food.

Upon returning to the United States, he traveled with a small theatrical troupe, singing and acting across the country. This continued until 1937 when Beard and a small group of friends created a catering company named Hors d’Oeuvre in New York. With the success of their business, Beard also published his first cookbook in 1940 titled Hors d’Oeuvre and Canapés followed quickly by Cook It Outdoors. Beard’s enthusiasm for food was catching and when combined with his knowledge of taste profiles and a warm personality, made him a force to be reckoned with.

After a brief stint in the military in 1943, Beard returned to New York and the culinary world in 1944. It was in 1946 that Beard landed the job that brought him fully into the spotlight that he had craved so badly during his early life. I Love to Eat was a fifteen-minute television show that debuted August 30, 1946 at 8:15 PM, the first cooking program ever on television. Introduced by a cow puppet named Elsie, the show eventually grew from a fifteen-minute time slot to an entire half hour and lasted until May 18th 1947.

Following the cancellation of his show, Beard published more cookbooks including The Fireside Cookbook, How To Eat Better For Less Money and The Casserole Cookbook. In 1955, Beard opened The James Beard Cooking School in New York, followed by a second cooking school in Seaside, Oregon and spent the next 30 years continuing to inspire the American population with cookbooks, television appearances, and magazine articles.

Beard continued to publish cookbooks up until just before his death. Suffering from a severe decline in health, he passed away from heart failure on January 21st 1985. His ashes were scattered over the Oregon coastline.

Carrying on Beard’s legacy to this day, the James Beard Foundation presents the yearly James Beard Awards to various chefs, restaurants, and cookbook authors, acknowledging their excellence in the culinary field. This award is considered one of the most prestigious awards to receive in the industry.

For more on Beard’s life, check out The Solace of Food: a life of James Beard by Robert Clark
The People

A selective list of friends, heroes, & associates mentioned in the play by Beard.

**Julia Child** A famous American chef, author, and television personality who is best known for bringing French cuisine to the United States in the 1960s. She was also a dear friend of Beard’s and described him as doing “...more for cooking in America than any one person in our history...”

**Georges Auguste Escoffier** An influential French culinary artist from the late 19th century. In the play he is referred to by Beard as “the first chef of London.”

**Sarah Bernhardt** Often referred to as “the most famous actress the world has ever known”, the French local made her fame by traveling worldwide in the 1880s.

**Enrico Caruso** A celebrated Italian tenor who was known for his versatility. In 1903, he traveled to New York and was contracted with the Metropolitan Opera.

**Oscar Wilde** An Irish native who became one of London’s most popular playwrights in the early 1890s. Some of his best known works include, *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. As mentioned in the play, he is also known for his scandalous affair with British author, Lord Douglas.

**D’Oyly Carte** An extremely successful entrepreneur during the 19th century. He did the majority of his work in London where he built two theatres and a hotel, and established an opera company and a management agency.

**Ninkasi** The ancient Sumerian goddess of beer.

**Marcel Proust** A French writer whose seven-volume novel, *Remembrance of Things Past*, is considered one of the great works of modern literature.

**Howdy Doody** A famous American television program on NBC whose main form of entertainment was puppetry. It ran from 1947-1960 and ended up following Beard’s cooking show.

**Richard Wagner** A German composer primarily known for his operas, or “musical dramas.” He tended to write particularly difficult roles for the tenor voice part, which gave fame to singers like Lauritz Melchior, who became known as a “Wagnerian tenor.”

**Maria Callas** An opera star who was born in America, but has a purely Greek heritage. She is considered one of the most renowned opera singers of the 20th century. She is referred to in the play as a favorite of Beard’s ever since he saw her dramatic performance in *Madame Butterfly*.

**Clark Gable** An American film actor who originated in Portland, Oregon. He is best known for his role as Rhett Butler in the 1939 film *Gone with the Wind*. 
The Food

A selective list of favorite dishes mentioned in the play by Beard.

**Crêpe Suzette**  A French dessert consisting of a crêpe with beurre Suzette, a sauce of caramelized sugar, butter, zest, and citrus liqueur on top, served flambé.

**Potatoes Anna**  A dish from France created by layering sliced potatoes and cooking them in a very large amount of melted butter.

**Apple Charlotte**  A British dessert involving a mould of buttered bread slices filled with cooked apples and then baked in an oven.

**Glenlivet**  A popular single malt Scotch whiskey. The biggest selling brand in the United States and the second biggest selling brand globally.

**Petites madeleines**  A very small sponge cake from France with a distinctive shell-like shape. The flavor is similar to that of sponge cake and traditional recipes include very finely ground nuts and lemon zest.

**Madrilène**  A French clear soup, made from richly flavored stock or bouillon, that has been clarified and flavored with tomato. It is typically served jellied and cold.

**Scallopinì alla limone**  An Italian side dish involving veal cutlets and lemon sauce.

**Duck a’ l’Orange**  A French dish in which a duck is roasted and served with an orange sauce.

**Canapé**  A small decorative food, usually made by topping a piece of bread, toast, or a cracker with a savory spread. It is intended to be held in the fingers and eaten in one bite.

**Succotash**  A dish primarily consisting of corn and beans. This was a popular dish in the United States during the Great Depression because of its inexpensive and readily available ingredients.

**Steak au poivre**  A French dish that consists of a steak, traditionally a filet mignon, which is coated with cracked peppercorns and then cooked, making a crust.
The Music

A selective list of songs and composers mentioned in the play by Beard.

**Puccini’s “Nessun Dorma”**  An aria from the final act of Puccini’s opera *Turandot*. It is one of the best-known tenor arias in the repertoire and is used in the play to introduce Beard.

**Stravinsky’s “Firebird”**  A ballet and orchestral work based on a Russian folk tale about a magical glowing bird that is both a blessing and a curse to its captor.

**“The Sun Whose Rays are All Ablaze”**  
from Gilbert and Sullivan’s *The Mikado*  
A popular song from this comic opera sung by the character of Yum-Yum. The show opened in London on March 14th, 1885.

**Der Rosenkavalier**  A comic opera by Richard Strauss with a German libretto specifically written for the show by poet Hugo von Hofmannsthal. It is loosely adapted from the novel *Les amours du chevalier de Faublas* by Louvet de Couvrai and *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac* by Molière. In the play Beard describes the opera as tasting like a creamy raspberry sherbet.

---

I don’t like gourmet cooking or ‘this’ cooking or ‘that’ cooking. I like good cooking.  

*James Beard*
What's cooking?

Quiche Lorraine?

Don't be, the name is the only difficult thing about it, Jane. First, cook ½ pound of bacon until crisp.

I'll drain the bacon on a paper towel.

In a skillet, heat one tablespoon butter, add one-half cup finely chopped onion. Cook 5 minutes.

While you grate one-half pound of Swiss cheese... I'll mix 3 slightly beaten eggs, ½ cup light cream and one teaspoon salt.

Next I add the cheese... the bacon, crumbled... and the sautéed onion...

Season with nutmeg and cayenne pepper.

Line a nine-inch pie pan with a plain pastry.

Oh, dear! Making pie crust scares me!

It shouldn't, but use a prepared mix if you wish.

It smells divine!

Bake ten minutes at 450°. Then lower the heat to 325° and cook until firm, about twenty minutes.

It looks wonderful! I can't wait to taste it!

Not yet. It's eaten warm—but not hot. And it can be re-heated. Serve it with a green salad and a good light wine.

I'll bet it—and you—will be a big success!
Portland’s Food Evolution

Greg Higgins is one of Portland’s most renowned chefs, and graciously served as a chef coach to actor Rob Nagle for this production. This excerpt from a 2010 article at zesterdaily.com highlights Mr. Higgins’ significant contributions to the Portland foodie scene.

To hear what the Portland, Ore., food scene was like when chef Greg Higgins arrived in 1984 is to be reminded of all that eaters today take for granted.

Fresh, local fruits and vegetables?
Nope.

Crusty loaves of artisan bread?
Nada.

Gourmet cheeses? Grass-fed beef? How about a dinner reservation after 8 p.m.?
No, no, and never.

Five hundred miles south, Chez Panisse, Alice Waters’ Berkeley, Calif., temple to regional ingredients, had been garnering national raves since the mid-1970s. But a decade later, the locavore revolution had not reached Portland or many other mid-sized and smaller cities.

Proprietors of Portland’s downtown Heathman Hotel wooed Higgins, then 26, down from Seattle. They took him to the city’s finest restaurants so he could check out the competition. The young chef thought to himself, “There’s got to be more here than this.”

Today, there is. A city used to playing third fiddle to San Francisco and Seattle has become a dining destination. Already celebrated for its wine, beer and coffee, Portland increasingly is known for its Northwest take on French, Indian, Thai and American cuisine (hamburgers being its latest obsession). Even its food carts get star billing on TV food shows and in magazines.

Discovering Portland’s bounty

To understand how Portland got here, you have to start with Higgins.

Born in upstate New York, he grew up amid vegetable fields and fruit orchards, harvesting and canning the bounty. Around age 7, he read Euell Gibbons’ classic “Stalking the Wild Asparagus” and became “obsessed with hunting and gathering,” he says. During high school, he worked for an artisan cheese-maker.

On a late-1970s trip to Europe, he found work on a farm in Alsace and was more or less adopted by the family that owned it. He was struck not just by the quality of the food but by a culture that still appreciated the farmers that produced it.

Higgins had majored in art in college and still thought of himself as a printmaker, not a cook. But the art school he’d planned to attend in Sun Valley, Idaho, folded soon after he got there. He stayed to ski and race bikes while working as a sous-chef. Then he followed a girlfriend to Seattle, and fell in love with the Northwest.

The seafood! The mushrooms! The berries! What had been a sidelight became a career.

The food scene in Seattle at that time was a little ahead of Portland, but not by much. It was dominated by corporate chains and old-school French restaurants. “People were inclined to pluck things out of the air and imitate,” Higgins says. “I wanted to create a dialogue with ingredients.”

What attracted him to Portland was its bounty. Located on the banks of the Willamette River, the city was on the edge of some of the country’s most fertile farm land. The Willamette Valley, he knew, was home to about 30 wineries (400 today).

“What sets it apart in so many ways is just remarkable ingredients,” he says. “Very, very seldom have I seen the scope and diversity.”

Northwest dives into sustainable, regional cuisine

Higgins was not the first to remark on the area’s treasures. Cookbook luminary James Beard, an Oregon native, considered the Northwest’s raw materials among the richest anywhere. After he made his name in New York City, he would return to teach cooking classes along the Oregon coast. But Beard, who was born in 1903 and died in 1985, grew up at a time when truck farmers still supplied cities’ food. When Higgins arrived in Portland, the truck farmers were long gone, and farmers markets had not yet enjoyed
their renaissance. Farmers sold their produce on farm stands or to produce wholesalers, not to restaurants. Higgins wanted his own suppliers. One by one, he found them.

At first, he approached the folks who tended the grounds at the Heathman, asking whether they grew anything at home. One woman said she had a rosemary bush. (She remains one of Higgins’ suppliers today, and now owns her own greenhouse.)

Often he’d just jump on his bicycle and pedal 20 minutes out of town to check out the farm stands. He bought rabbits from a guy who worked in a factory, mushrooms from a forest forager.

“The accounting department at the Heathman hated me,” he says. “They’d say, ‘Why can’t you find one supplier?’”

His customers loved it. Just as the markets were there, waiting to be tapped, so were the eaters. Oregonians aren’t afraid to try new things. And when they like something — be it good coffee, good beer or distinctly Northwest cooking — they become intensely loyal.

“We don’t stop halfway into something,” Higgins says. “We dive in.”

After leading the restaurant at the Heathman to widespread acclaim, Higgins left in 1994 to open his own restaurant down the street. In a town awash in new restaurants, Higgins Restaurant and Bar is an institution, known for such dishes as the “whole pig plate” with house-made fennel sausage, buckwheat crepes with artichoke and shiitake mushrooms as well as risotto of hazelnut-smoked Sockeye salmon.

A founder of the Portland chapter of the Farmer-Chef Connection, Higgins has helped other restaurateurs forge ties with local farmers, fishermen and foragers.

“When I first moved here, people thought we were off our bloody rocker when we went to a lender and said we were going to open a restaurant using local, sustainable food,” he says. “Now it’s the way people do it.”

Mary Engel is a freelance writer based in Seattle. [http://waywest.typepad.com/maryengel/](http://waywest.typepad.com/maryengel/)

---

Local Connections


Also, check out the Share Our Strength’s Taste of the Nation event for an exciting mouth watering experience: [http://ce.strength.org/events/taste-nation-portland-or](http://ce.strength.org/events/taste-nation-portland-or).


Visit [http://www.oregonfoodbank.org/](http://www.oregonfoodbank.org/) to learn more about hunger in Oregon, the Oregon Food Bank and how you can help.