



Windstar Cruises Announces James Beard Award Winners Chef Maxime Bilet and Sommelier Belinda Chang as Newest Culinary Pairing Coming Aboard in 2018



Chef Maxime Bilet



Sommelier Belinda Chang



Sommelier Katie Bell

Noteworthy Sommelier Katie Bell Also Added to Sailing in Norway; Stars Join Roster of Experts for Windstar's Six Culinary Themed Cruises in 2018

Seattle, WA, March 27, 2018 — Following the announcement that [Windstar Cruises](#) and the [James Beard Foundation](#) have extended their partnership to explore the world through expert-led, locally inspired cruise cuisine through early 2021, the line reveals the latest chef and sommelier team in its series of culinary themed cruises setting sail this year, as well as the addition of a star sommelier to a previously announced sailing in Norway.

Celebrated Seattle Chef Maxime Bilet and Chicago-based Sommelier Belinda Chang are slated to join the distinctive program, which hand-picks acclaimed culinary experts to share their knowledge with travelers, in June. Sommelier Katie Bell will collaborate with Chef Evan Hanczor in August.

Maxime and Chang will engage with food lovers aboard *Wind Surf* for the ***Hidden Harbors of the Côte d'Azur*** cruise, departing Nice, France, on June 20. Designed to give guests personal access to these superstars of the culinary world, the itinerary features a hosted dinner with Chef Bilet, including wine pairings skillfully curated by Belinda Chang; cooking demonstrations and wine tastings throughout the cruise; and local market tours with each expert (where available). The seven-day journey of coastal cuisine will sail through the French Riviera, stopping to explore the authentic and less developed ports of [Bastia](#), [Antibes](#), [Le Lavandou](#), [Marseille](#), [Sanary-sur-Mer](#) and [Palamos](#), before culminating in [Barcelona](#). As always, passengers can also enjoy Windstar's signature service, activities, and unique shore excursions on this cruise.

Maxime grew up in the south of France, and his grandmother still lives there. He is very familiar with the region's cuisine and is excited to return as well as introduce Windstar guests to his favorite dishes, markets, and culinary experiences.

Belinda is excited to explore some of the most exciting wines and dishes in the world that are native to the South of France and Spain, where they were created and grown. She looks forward to this sailing and can't wait to share the wine and delight in the cuisine at the table with Windstar guests.

Katie will join fellow Brooklyn-based Chef Evan Hanczor on a Windstar sailing in Norway. She is no stranger to Nordic cuisine or pairing appropriate wines for the journey, as her role at New York City restaurant Agern necessitates it. The award-winning restaurant is known for its use of time-honored techniques and flavors rooted in Nordic cuisine.

"Our partnership with the James Beard Foundation demonstrates Windstar's commitment to elevating epicurean experiences around the world," said Windstar President John Delaney. "We are excited to welcome renowned experts Maxime Bilet, Belinda Chang, and Katie Bell into our Windstar family. We look forward to offering our guests the opportunity to learn from their depth of knowledge and years of experience as culinary innovators, plus, sharing new JBF-inspired dishes on our menus. The recipes from our recent guest chefs have been a big hit, and with all of the new talent sailing in 2018 we are excited to add many more diverse cuisine offerings that are authentic to the regions we sail."

Chef Maxime Bilet of Imagine Food Innovation Group of Seattle, WA

Accomplished is one word to describe Chef Maxime Bilet. Named one of *Forbes'* top "30 under 30" in the food and wine industry in 2012, and by *Escoffier* as one of the best emerging chefs of that year, Bilet is the co-author of *Modernist Cuisine: The Art and Science of Cooking* – recipient of the James Beard Foundation's 2012 Book of the Year Award, and the International Association of Culinary Professionals' Visionary Achievement – and *Modernist Cuisine at Home*. After working in the development lab of the Fat Duck with Heston Blumenthal, he became the director of culinary arts and sciences at The Cooking Lab in Bellevue, WA, and is a co-inventor on ten pending patents that resulted from his experiments. In 2014 he won a Washington state grant to showcase his inter-disciplinary approach, Art for Food, and created the Imagine Food Innovation Group the following year. Chef Bilet is now in the process of unifying his wealth of experience in the food industry to develop a comprehensive approach to food system solutions on a global scale. A featured speaker at events around the world, Maxime and his work have appeared in television programs, including the *Martha Stewart Show*, Andrew Zimmern's *Bizarre Foods*, *Top Chef Seattle* and the History Channel's *Modern Marvels*.

Sommelier Belinda Chang of Chicago, IL

Chicago's only James Beard Award-winning sommelier and multiple James Beard Award winner, Belinda Chang, has appeared on stage and on camera as a wine and spirits expert, speaker, and educator for the James Beard Foundation, the National Restaurant Association National Show, the *Food and Wine Classic* in Aspen, the Taste of Beverly Hills, and more. Esteemed author of wine notes for cookbooks including Charlie Trotter's *Meat and Game* and Rick Tramonto's *Fantastico: Little Italian Plates and Antipasti*, she has also created wine lists around the world recognized with awards from *Food & Wine* magazine, *Wine Spectator*, and others.

Sommelier Katie Bell of Brooklyn, NY

Katie Bell grew up spending time on three continents, and a childhood of significant travel taught her the language of food as a way to experience and connect. From the age of 15, Katie cooked pizzas, washed dishes, scooped ice cream, hosted, bartended, served, and managed – spending time in nearly every position in the restaurant. Katie moved to New York City to work for Chef Thomas Keller at Per Se, followed by a role as service director for Chef Dan Barber's Blue Hill in Manhattan, where she oversaw all service, worked as a sommelier, and curated the beer and cocktail list. During her tenure, the restaurant was recognized as Outstanding Restaurant by the James Beard Foundation and nominated for Outstanding Service. In 2016, Katie opened Agern Restaurant in Grand Central Terminal as the general manager along with Chef Gunnar Gislasen and Restaurateur Claus Meyer, of Noma. Within its first year, Agern received

three stars from the *New York Times*, one Michelin star, and numerous accolades for its all-American wine list.

Last month the award-winning small ship line announced the all-star chef and beverage experts for the first four of its six culinary themed cruises for 2018. With the addition of Bilet, Chang, and Bell, the collection now includes:

- **June 20, 2018 — Hidden Harbors of the Côte d'Azur featuring Chef Maxime Bilet and Beverage Expert Sommelier Belinda Chang**
- **June 27, 2018 — Spanish Symphony aboard Wind Surf featuring Chef Anthony Sasso and Beverage Expert Sommelier Ashley Santoro**
- **August 7, 2018 — Gems of the Adriatic Sea on Wind Surf featuring culinary experts to be announced soon**
- **August 17, 2018 — Norwegian Splendors aboard Star Breeze featuring Chef Evan Hanczor and Beverage Expert Katie Bell**
- **November 26, 2018 — Tahiti & the Tuamotu Islands aboard Wind Spirit featuring Pastry Chef Emily Luchetti and Beverage Expert Shelley Lindgren**
- **December 15, 2018 — Windward Islands Surf & Sunsets aboard Star Pride featuring Chef José Mendin and beverage expert to be announced soon**

Windstar is known for many things on its iconic small ships, such as personalized service, Watersports Platforms where guests can enjoy the ocean, and access to small intimate ports larger ships can't possibly enter. The line is also respected for its culinary programs – sourcing local food where possible, bringing guests to local markets to shop with the chef, baking all breads on board daily, preparing meals to order, consulting with guests one-to-one to tailor menus to diets, serving regional specialties that vary by destination, and simply providing the best quality ingredients available.

Windstar prides itself on delivering destination authenticity to guests and each culinary expert has been specially chosen based on his or her affinity and passion for the cuisines and cultures of the cruise itineraries where the culinary expert will sail. The intimate small ships of Windstar carrying fewer than 310 guests provide the perfect atmosphere for daily one-to-one interactions with these accomplished and personable cuisine ambassadors.

As the exclusive cruise line of the James Beard Foundation, Windstar will be involved as a major partner for a number of the Foundations' annual endeavors supporting culinary excellence, growth, awareness, and advocacy including the Chefs Boot Camp for Policy and Change; the 2018 James Beard Awards at the Lyric Opera in Chicago, considered the ultimate prize in the world of cuisine; JBF's Taste America® events – occurring in the fall in major cities around the country including fundraising dinners, complimentary culinary tastings and demonstrations with James Beard-recognized culinary experts; and a sponsor of Chefs & Champagne® — the James Beard Foundation's annual summer tasting party in the Hamptons.

To learn more about authentic small ship cruising with Windstar, contact a travel professional or Windstar Cruises by phone at 800-258-7245, email info@windstarcruises.com or visit www.windstarcruises.com.

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Windstar Cruises operates a six-ship fleet of small sailing and all-suite ships visiting approximately 270 ports in 2018 sailing throughout Europe, the Caribbean, Costa Rica and the Panama Canal, Asia, Alaska, Canada and New England, and cruising year-round in Tahiti. Windstar's fleet is the market leader in small ship cruising with a total of 1,242 passenger berths calling on off-the-beaten-path and popular ports in over 60 countries. The boutique cruise line carries fewer than 310 passengers on its small ships and takes travelers on cruises that are 180 degrees from ordinary. They are known for their immersive and authentic experiences, unique, port-intensive itineraries, exceptional award-winning service, and innovative culinary program as the Official Cruise Line of the James Beard Foundation. Windstar Cruises is a part of Xanterra Travel Collection, an award-winning, globally diversified travel company offering once in a lifetime experiences in some of the most beautiful and iconic places on earth.

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