

The Ordinary's Mike Lata and Adam Nemirow on the James Beard Nomination, and 10 Years at FIG

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[Photo: *The Ordinary* <<http://eattheordinary.com/>>]

The **James Beard Foundation Awards** are being announced this evening, and Charleston's instantaneous hotspot for oysters, seafood towers and cocktails **The Ordinary** <<http://eattheordinary.com/>> is a finalist for best new restaurant <<http://charleston.eater.com/archives/2013/03/18/watch-the-jbf-announcements-via-livestream.php>> . Owners **Adam Nemirow** and chef **Mike Lata** talked with Eater Charleston about receiving the Beard nod right after opening and getting their heads around running two restaurants.

Last month also marked a milestone for their original restaurant, downtown's ever-popular **FIG**, which just celebrated its tenth anniversary. With general busyness and the Beard awards on the horizon, the day passed relatively quietly; the two hoped to celebrate with a round of golf at some point. But here, the pair explain why the decade-old restaurant has started smoldering once again.

ECHS: What does James Beard nomination mean for you both?

Nemirow: I have a tremendous amount of respect for the James Beard Foundation, and we were hopeful, but not expecting the nomination. I think it's kind of a coup that we got in there at the last minute.

Lata: Well, there are a lot of new restaurants out there, and I honestly can tell you that as I was putting on my tuxedo today (to see if it still fits), I realized the last time I wore it was in 2009 [when he won "Best Chef Southeast"]. I'll tell you, I'm no taller. That really brought me back to how special [the award] is, and Adam was right there next to me.

...We could not be more honored. We're taking our entire crew to show them it's as much theirs as it is ours. It'll give them a chance to experience something that's part hard work, part luck. And who knows? I never thought I'd be there again.

Nemirow: And this is a special one, too. There's only one chance to win best new restaurant. You don't get a chance at best new restaurant.

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Lata: I in my last four years, I probably referred to winning the Southeast award as 'I won' only once, because it's not about just me. Obviously, you can't win that award without having the right people around you. But nobody will ever take that away from you. And to let Adam be able to have that experience, where we can still say 'we.' He'll get to vote if we win, he'll get the medallion if we win. He'll become part of the history in the making.

ECHS: So, what's next for you at The Ordinary?

Nemirow: We're not finished...we're about 90 percent done with the decor, the menu, the service. We got as close as we can as best we could within the time we've been open, but we have to constantly adapt to what people want, and what we want to do. We keep using the time frame of 18 months to see the full cycle of things, the seasonality, what our guests want and don't want.

It's still tough getting my head around having two places. I bounce back and forth to both places, and it's confusing. I'd like to get the confusion out of my head.

Lata: It's funny, I feel the same way. A lot of times in cooking we talk about the spectrum. The victory side and the loss side, and you have to kind of know and touch both sides to understand how to do it properly. You can't learn to do it really well, unless you make a mistake. So instead of placing my will on the two establishments, it's been a really interesting study to be patient and to see what maybe is happening naturally, with the team we've assembled, with the mentoring we've done, with the brand we've established.

Obviously, everything goes through us, but there's a big difference between Adam and I high-fiving at FIG and saying, 'let's turn this on a dime' whenever we want to, because we were controlling everything. I was pulling all the strings in the back and Adam was pulling all the strings in the front, so it was very easy for us to pivot and change. Now, if we did that, we would be messing a lot of people up.

The hallmark of our business has always been to be consistent, and I think we have to just watch our people that we put in charge to see where they need help but, ultimately, I can't micromanage or I think I'd drive both restaurants right into the ground, personally.

ECHS: In addition to this nomination, FIG turned 10 recently. Any big changes over the past couple of years?

Lata: Everything has blossomed, everything has been reborn. So, FIG was not the media darling it had once been, as of late. In 2010 and 2011 and 2012, we saw a lot of restaurants open. And if you think about the kind of restaurants that opened, some of them are kind of like FIG. After 10 years...there's a whole generation who think about us like maybe we've been around forever.

But The Ordinary reignited everyone's interest in the company, and it seems like FIG just started smoldering. It just got interesting again, the public eye. And Jason [Stanhope, the chef de cuisine], David [McCarus, the GM], Dana [Allen, manager] and the sous chefs have really just owned that so well. At a time when people were looking at FIG again differently, [the staff there] really rose to the occasion and represented beautifully.

Nemirow: I think Jason's moment in the sun is about to happen. He gets so much great feedback from the customers...he's become quite a technician. Probably the best chef, besides Mike, to connect with the front of the house, which I think is often overlooked.

· All coverage of FIG <<http://charleston.eater.com/tags/fig>> [ECHS]

· All coverage of The Ordinary <<http://charleston.eater.com/tags/the-ordinary>> [ECHS]