

## Victoria & Albert's Chef Among Semi-finalists Named Best in South

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla., February 22, 2011 – The James Beard Foundation has released its highly coveted annual list of top chefs in the country and among the semi-finalists for “Best Chef: South” is Scott Hunnel of Victoria & Albert's at Disney's Grand Floridian Resort & Spa.

Established in 1990, the James Beard Foundation Awards, [www.jamesbeard.org/awards](http://www.jamesbeard.org/awards), recognize culinary professionals for excellence and achievement in their fields and continue to emphasize the Foundation's mission: to celebrate, preserve, and nurture America's culinary heritage and diversity.

To make the list of the best and the brightest talents in the food and beverage industries, the James Beard Foundation annually holds an online open call for entries beginning in mid-October. This year, over 28,000 entries were received, the most in the Awards' history. Semifinalists in 19 awards categories are determined by committee and placed on a nominating ballot. The list of nominees is then sent to an independent volunteer panel of more than 550 judges across the country, who votes to determine five finalists in each category. Results are kept confidential until the winners are announced at the Lincoln Center in New York City in May.

This isn't the first time Chef Hunnel has been nominated as one of James Beard's best. He also got a nod from the Foundation in 2007, 2008 and 2009 for his refreshingly contemporary approach in the kitchen and straightforward cooking philosophy.

For the past 17 years, Hunnel has drawn national and international applause for his preparation of American regional cuisine with classical influences. During his tenure at Victoria & Albert's, the elegant, 50-seat restaurant has repeatedly achieved AAA Five-Diamond status – the only restaurant to do so in Central Florida.

To keep exceeding guests' expectations, Chef Hunnel often takes gastronomic journeys around the world for inspiration and ideas. In recent years, his search has taken him to the kitchen of George V in Paris, truffle hunting in Italy and to markets and restaurants in Hong Kong, Bangkok and London. Those experiences have led to other accolades including Forbes Four Diamonds, the DiR?NA Award of Excellence, *Wine Spectator's* Best of Award of Excellence and *Florida Trend's* Golden Spoon award.