

# ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

Molly Smith Artistic Director Edgar Dobie Managing Director Zelda Fichandler Founding Director

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## Arena Stage announces José Andrés Catering with Ridgewells as operator of cafe in the Mead Center for American Theater

\*\*\* Design Cuisine, Fresh Start Catering, José Andrés Catering with Ridgewells and Salamander Hospitality also named exclusive caterers \*\*\*

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage is proud to announce that **José Andrés Catering with Ridgewells** has been selected to operate the cafe in the Mead Center for American Theater. The idea for this partnership was first discussed between Arena Stage Artistic Director Molly Smith and José Andrés, chef/owner of ThinkFoodGroup and local restaurants including Jaleo, Café Atlántico and Minibar, almost six years ago when Smith began to envision a space in the Mead Center that could offer José's unparalleled culinary creations. The culmination of this work will open in the fall. Detailed information including menus and operating hours will be announced at a later time.

In addition to this news, Arena Stage also announces that **Design Cuisine, Fresh Start Catering and Salamander Hospitality** will join **José Andrés Catering with Ridgewells** to be the four exclusive catering services provided within the Mead Center.

"I have been a longtime fan of José's restaurants, and am just plain thrilled that José Andrés Catering with Ridgewells will be creating food in our beautiful new cafe space," shares Smith. "Along with other exclusive catering partners, Arena Stage will now not only be a home for American theater in Southwest, D.C. but of the culinary arts as well. The synchronicity between great art and great food is undeniable."

"Many years ago when Molly told me of her dreams for the new Arena Stage, I knew I wanted to be a part of it," adds Andrés. "And now, my team and our partners at Ridgewells are here at Washington's most amazing new destination."

"These four exclusive catering companies partnering with us to service events in the Mead Center have immense expertise," says Arena Stage Managing Director Edgar Dobie. "They have each been chosen specifically due to their diverse approach to catering and event design, and ultimately for their demonstrated reputation and commitment to delivering incomparable service and outstanding events."

A native of Spain, **José Andrés** is chef/owner of ThinkFoodGroup (TFG), the team responsible for Washington's popular and award-winning dining concepts Jaleo, Zaytinya, Oyamel, Café Atlántico and the critically acclaimed Minibar by José Andrés, as well as Los Angeles' exciting award-winning destination, The Bazaar by José Andrés, part of the SLS Hotel at Beverly Hills. Recently, José and TFG partner and C.E.O. Rob Wilder joined with Ridgewells, the premiere catering and event company in D.C., to create José Andrés Catering with Ridgewells, offering the creative cuisines found in his restaurants.

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**José Andrés Catering with Ridgewells** elevates catering and event planning to new heights in the Washington, D.C. area and beyond. Now you can experience the inspired creations of celebrated chef José Andrés at your own party or venue. They have combined the delectable dishes and inviting flavors found in José Andrés' ThinkFoodGroup ([www.thinkfoodgroup.com](http://www.thinkfoodgroup.com)) restaurants with the experience and service of Ridgewells ([www.ridgewells.com](http://www.ridgewells.com)), which for more than 80 years has set the standard in the Washington area for catering and event planning. [www.joseandrescatering.com](http://www.joseandrescatering.com)

Someone once said there are four personality types: explorers, builders, negotiators and directors. If that's so, then **Design Cuisine** is made up of equal parts of each. Their adaptable team has explored venues, built up bare rooms into compelling backdrops, negotiated wide tables through tight doorways, and directed some of the most complex events in the Washington metropolitan area and beyond. They believe that a full-service caterer should lend its expertise, experience and energy to the process of guiding a client through the millions of little decisions leading up to the event. They believe that a dedication to providing unparalleled service should persist until the departure of the last guest. Above all, they believe in making their clients happy. [www.designcuisine.com](http://www.designcuisine.com)

A social enterprise project of D.C. Central Kitchen, **Fresh Start Catering** makes it easy and delicious for its clients to eat local and do good. Seasoned with local ingredients and 11 years of experience, Fresh Start stresses purchasing from area farms, reducing its environmental impact and serving up fresh products as they are harvested throughout the year. Fresh Start also provides critical employment opportunities for graduates of D.C.C.K.'s Culinary Job Training program, which equips unemployed adults with the professional and life skills to overcome homelessness, hunger and cycles of dependency. [www.freshstartcatering.com](http://www.freshstartcatering.com)

Founded by noted entrepreneur and philanthropist Sheila C. Johnson in 2005, in addition to providing catering services to Washington's most exclusive events, **Salamander Hospitality** owns, manages and develops hotels, resorts and inns that reflect the authenticity and character of their surrounding environment. All Salamander Hospitality employees are trained in Five-Star and Five-Diamond service to ensure guests experience Salamander's unique brand of personal service. Todd Gray, the award-winning chef of Equinox Restaurant and a top culinary talent in the nation's capital, serves as Culinary Director of Salamander Hospitality. Todd's culinary creativity and expertise exceed expectations and assure flawless results. An avid promoter of local and seasonal cuisine Todd is a leading advocate of Michelle Obama's "Chefs Move to Schools" program. [www.salamanderhospitality.com](http://www.salamanderhospitality.com)

*Under the leadership of Artistic Director Molly Smith and Managing Director Edgar Dobie, D.C.-based **Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater** has become the largest company in the country dedicated to American voices. With the opening of the Mead Center for American Theater, Arena Stage has become a leading center for the production, presentation, development and study of American theater. Now in its sixth decade, Arena Stage serves a diverse annual audience of more than 200,000. [www.arenastage.org](http://www.arenastage.org).*

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