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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Georgia Department of Agriculture, Georgia Restaurant Association announce 2017 Georgia Grown Executive Chefs**

**ATLANTA (Feb. 22, 2017)** – The Georgia Department of Agriculture Commissioner Gary W. Black and Georgia Restaurant Association (GRA) CEO Karen Bremer announced the 2017 Georgia Grown Executive Chefs on Wednesday, Feb. 22, 2017 at the GRA's 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Taste of Georgia Legislative Reception, held at the Georgia Railroad Freight Depot.

Now entering its sixth year, the Georgia Grown Executive Chef Program seeks to promote the Georgia Department of Agriculture's Georgia Grown campaign statewide. The program offers participating chefs a mark of honor and distinction, while increasing awareness for both restaurateurs and consumers about which local Georgia products are available for the cooking season.

As the program grows, it will create a pathway for consumers to find Georgia Grown products in their communities in order to support local, seasonal foods when dining out. It also aims to highlight and involve public school culinary education and school food nutrition in terms of increased opportunities for Georgia Grown products, training and recipe development. The chefs will participate in a spring and fall school event, an organized farm tour, at least one seasonal cooking clip with the Department and at least one Georgia Grown cooking event designated by Black. The chefs also have the opportunity to prepare a dinner at the James Beard House in New York City.

The six chefs announced for 2017 include: Chef Jason Paolini of Longleaf, Chef Rusty Bowers of Pine Street Market, Chef Nick Leahy of Saltyard, Chef Dusty Grove of PACCI Italian Kitchen + Bar, Chef Cynthia Graubart author of an award winning cook book and Chef Megan Brent of White Oak Kitchen + Cocktails. These six chefs are joining the ranks of 21 other chefs in the Georgia Grown program, which comprise of cook book authors, caterers, executive chefs, university affiliates, grocery stores and more.

"All of these chefs bring such a diverse background to make one collective group of unique talents," said Karen Bremer, CEO of the Georgia Restaurant Association. "The goal is to have these chefs continue to promote Georgia Grown products and build relationships between chefs and farmers in our state.

"We are pleased with the continued success of the Georgia Grown Executive Chef program and the quality of chefs we have been able to acquire each year," mentioned Commissioner of Agriculture Gary Black. "These culinary ambassadors allow us to better communicate with our consumers and bridge the gap between the farm and the table."



### **About the Georgia Restaurant Association**

The GRA's mission is to serve as the voice for Georgia's restaurants in advocacy, education and awareness. The GRA is sanctioned by the National Restaurant Association to operate Georgia's only not-for-profit representing the state's foodservice industry. The GRA serves as the unified voice for over 17,000 foodservice and drinking places in the state of Georgia with total sales in excess of \$19.6 billion which provides more than 446,600 jobs. From large chains to start-ups, the GRA helps make Georgia a better place for restaurants to do business and helps make restaurants better for Georgia.

### **About Georgia Grown**

The Department of Agriculture's Georgia Grown program provides a powerful branding tool as well as education, marketing and business connections to expand agribusinesses and the agricultural industry throughout the state. Learn more or join Georgia Grown at [www.GeorgiaGrown.com](http://www.GeorgiaGrown.com).

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