

## Minnesota Now (MPR) | Minnesota Now James Beard nominee Karyn Tomlinson tells us what's for lunch 01GW5EV176RCGCETAWBKQEMWZN

CATHY WURZER: Four chefs and one pastry chef from the Twin Cities have been nominated by the prestigious James Beard Foundation for Best Chef Midwest. Finalists will be announced March 29, and we've been catching up with all of them this week. And since our show was over the lunch hour, we thought we would ask them, hey, what's for lunch?

So far, we talked to James Beard-nominated chefs, Christina Nguyen and Yia Vang, and today, I'm talking with Chef Karyn Tomlinson. Karyn is the chef and owner of the Saint Paul restaurant, Myriel. Karyn, welcome to *Minnesota Now*. How are you?

**KARYN** I'm doing great. Thank you.

**TOMLINSON:**

**CATHY** Of course I mentioned lunch, so I got to ask you, what are you having for lunch today?

**WURZER:**

**KARYN** Well, my lunch is always a little bit goofy. Usually, we'll do lunch together. We'll do a staff meal at Myriel, but it isn't until 3:30. As you know, restaurant schedules are a little bit wonky. They're a little bit different than your average 9 to 5. So yes, that is lunch for us.

**TOMLINSON:**

**CATHY** What are you planning--

**WURZER:**

**KARYN** And honestly-- well, I'm not sure what it is today. I'm not making it today. But the last time I made it, I did kind of a hash, with some golden potatoes and some braised heritage beef and the like. It was kind of a cold day. We had a salad with that.

**TOMLINSON:**

But I love doing-- I keep promising the staff I'm going to throw down and make a Vietnamese meal, because that sort of is my favorite thing to do on my own time. I have two Vietnamese sisters.

**CATHY** And so do you have a family recipe? You have anything when it comes to Vietnamese food? Do you have something special that you like to make, that's a favorite dish?

**WURZER:**

**KARYN** Yeah. Well, I'm going to make egg rolls, for sure, the way that my sister taught me. And I'll probably do a rice noodle salad with that.

**TOMLINSON:**

**CATHY** Oh, the egg rolls are the best. OK. Say, how would you, by the way, describe the food that you serve at Myriel?

**WURZER:**

**KARYN** Well, it's not that. I can tell you that. [CHUCKLES] But what we do is we really-- we work with some really cool small-scale farmers who are doing amazing things. A lot of them are kind of in an area west of the Cities, around Jaslow, Cokato, and Hutchinson.

**TOMLINSON:**

And so we source our food from them, mostly, and use really old cooking techniques. So I studied in France, spent time in Sweden, and those kind of European colder-weather climate, timeless techniques are reflected in our style of cooking.

**CATHY** Give me an idea of what that means, specifically.

**WURZER:**

**KARYN** Yeah. So basically, you'll always find a bowl of grains or legumes on the menu on the a-la-carte menu. We have

**TOMLINSON:** two. We have an a-la-carte menu that's always available, and then we have a tasting menu, which is like 13 courses or so, and that happens every night at one time.

And that's where we kind of really pull out all the stops. We do only whole animal butchery, so that's where we feature some of the items that are really limited on an animal-- and so like, pork loin, for example. And then, on our a-la-carte menu, we do things that are kind of more rustic, like what you'd expect in an old country inn, if you're a traveler.

And so we'll have a bowl of lentils, for example. That's on the menu-- maybe some braised beef. We always have duck on the menu as well. And just right now, for example, our duck dish is sort of our take on the classic duck a l'orange.

**CATHY** Mm. That sounds fantastic. My gosh. Say, I asked this question of Christina and Yia. I'll ask the same to you. What

**WURZER:** does it mean to be James Beard-nominated? How does it affect the business?

**KARYN** It was a great boost, especially when they first-- the announcement first came out. And that was really awesome

**TOMLINSON:** timing for restaurants, because it's kind of a notoriously quiet time of year for restaurant business. So that was really nice.

And we'll see what this next round-- I imagine it might be the same. But it's been really sweet just to see the support that we've had from our community and people who are excited that there are a handful of people up for the nomination.

**CATHY** By the way, what brings you joy in the kitchen? Because the restaurant business is really hard. It's really hard. So

**WURZER:** where do you find your joy?

**KARYN** Oh, that's-- wow. If you have about five hours, I could get really into it. [LAUGHS] But just in a snapshot, in the

**TOMLINSON:** kitchen, I love the sense of nurture, both with my staff. I love seeing them really flourish and do well. I have an incredible staff at Myriel.

They make it happen every single day, with grace and dignity, and are learning all the time. So that gives me a lot of joy. And then, also just being able to connect the dots for people, and maybe make them look twice at something that they might otherwise take for granted, like an ingredient or learning something about farming-- that really gives me a lot of joy, too.

**CATHY** I'm wondering, do you ever get tired of cooking? And I can't imagine that you would, but do you ever find

**WURZER:** yourself slipping back into-- I'm just going to make a-- slap together a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, I'm just done with this? Or--

**KARYN** Oh, all the time on my own.

**TOMLINSON:**

**CATHY** OK, OK.

**WURZER:**

**KARYN TOMLINSON:** No, every night, I come home, and I'll have a really basic cup of cereal, and I'll sit on a little stool in my kitchen and just stare at the wall. But usually, I try to, at least once a week, make a meal. Like last night, I had my dear friend, Erin Ungerman from New France Wine, over.

And I told her, Erin, I need accountability. It's been a busy week, but I need to make something like a meal for dinner. So she came over and made some salmon. I love having something healthy on my nights off.

**CATHY WURZER:** By the way, before you go, what's the rest of the day look like? After lunch?

**KARYN TOMLINSON:** Well, after lunch-- yes, after lunch-- we're headed into service. It's a little bit of a quieter week this week in Saint Paul, because of spring break. So actually, this is a great week for people to just walk in.

This is a-- I know we kind of fill up really fast, but this is a great, great time to come in and check out Myriel. But I'll be going in and there for the night for dinner service.

**CATHY WURZER:** All right. Karyn Tomlinson, I wish you all the best. Good luck, by the way, when the list of finalists comes out.

**KARYN TOMLINSON:** Thank you.

**CATHY WURZER:** Yeah. Thank you for the conversation, so much. We appreciate it. Karyn Tomlinson is with Myriel. She is up for this year's James Beard Foundation's Best Chef of the Midwest Award. Finalists will be announced next week, winners in early June.