

Celebrating SA's culinary rock stars at the 2019 *Eat Out* Awards

 By Eugene Yiga

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The 21st annual *Eat Out* Mercedes-Benz Restaurant Awards recently took place at the GrandWest Grand Arena in Cape Town.

Hosted by Elana Afrika-Bredenkamp and Maps Maponyane, the event that featured an eight-course lunch prepared by 11 of the country's top chefs along with performances from the Ndlovu Youth Choir.

It was another spectacular way to celebrate the rock stars of South Africa's culinary world.



La Colombe ranked no.1 at 2019 *Eat Out* Mercedes-Benz Restaurant Awards

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"We have been celebrating the best for over two decades," said Aileen Lamb, MD of New Media, which owns *Eat Out*.

"We are in awe of (the) ongoing commitment to excellence in running a restaurant: training, cooking, creating, reinventing, serving, pleasing, cleaning, dealing with the most complex of dietary exclusions, and then having the courage, passion, and dedication to doing it all over again the next day and the next and the next."

La Colombe takes the top spot

First place went to La Colombe in Cape Town (up from third place last year), with its offshoot La Petite Colombe in Franschhoek ranking sixth and its sommelier Joseph Dhafana winning the *Eat Out* Wine Service Award.

The restaurant also featured on the extended list of the World's 50 Best Restaurant Awards earlier this year and will be opening another restaurant in Franschhoek, called Epice, at the end of November.



“This is an incredible achievement for the restaurant,” said Chef James Gaag. “I have the most incredible team and this award belongs to them. Scot Kirton (executive chef of the La Colombe group of restaurants, which includes Protégé in Franschhoek and Foxcroft in Constantia) has given us an incredible platform to showcase what we have to offer to the food industry and I can’t thank him enough.”

Second place goes to The Test Kitchen

Second place for the second time went to The Test Kitchen in Cape Town, ranked 44th in the world and winner of both the *Eat Out* Service Excellence award and inaugural *Eat Out* Nespresso Innovation Award.



“It’s a huge honour to receive this,” said Chef Luke Dale-Roberts, who launched a pub lunch pop-up at the restaurant a few months ago.

“Innovation is the bedrock to any successful establishment. You have to be innovative and keep creating. And that’s what we do at The Test Kitchen. We come to work every morning and we think about what we can do that’s new today. And I still love it.”

The Restaurant at Waterkloof comes in at 3

Third place went to The Restaurant at Waterkloof in Somerset West, Paul Thinus Prinsloo also won the Best Young Chef in Africa and the Middle East at the S.Pellegrino Young Chef award earlier this year.



“It’s been a very difficult year for me and I’m very grateful to receive this tonight,” said Chef Gregory Czarnecki.

“A few weeks ago someone came to visit the restaurant and made me realise how nostalgic and full of storytelling the menu is and how much of myself, as a person, I’ve put on the menu. I didn’t plan it that way but it’s something I felt I had to do. This really means a lot to me.”

Rest of the top 10

Making up the top 10 are: Wolfgang in Paternoster (fourth and chosen as one of *Time Magazine*’s top 100 places of the year); FYN Restaurant in Cape Town (fifth and winner of both the *Eat Out* Style Award and the *Eat Out* John Psillos Award for Outstanding Contribution to Service for front of house manager Jennifer Hugé); Eike in Stellenbosch (seventh and winner of the *Eat Out* S.Pellegrino & Acqua Panna Chef of the Year for Bertus Basson); Salsify in Cape Town (eighth); Restaurant Mosaic at The Orient in Pretoria (ninth); and Chefs Warehouse at Beau Constantia in Cape Town (10th and winner of the *Eat Out* Graham Beck Chefs’ Chef for Ivor Jones, who shared the award with Chris Erasmus of Foliage in Franschoek last year).



Ania Odyniecka, Bertus Basson Eat Out S.Pellegrino & Acqua Panna

“To be the chef of the year is crazy,” Basson said. “It’s such an affirmation for me. I’m very proud of who I am and where I come from. And I’m proud of South Africa. I was born here, I was raised here, and whatever happens in our country – we go through lots of sh*t constantly – I’ll never live anywhere else.”

Rounding up with the top 20

The rest of the top 20 were: Camphors at Vergelegen in Somerset West (11th and winner of the *Eat Out* Woolworths Sustainability Award); Overture in Stellenbosch (12th); LivingRoom at Summerhill Estate in Durban (13th); Chefs Warehouse at Maison in Franschhoek (14th); Greenhouse at The Cellars-Hohenort in Cape Town (15th); Le Coin Français in Franschhoek (16th); La Tête in Cape Town (17th); The Shortmarket Club in Cape Town (18th); Tjing Tjing Momiji in Cape Town (19th); and Rust en Vrede in Stellenbosch (20th).



Camphors at Vergelegen, Michael Cooke, Christo Deyzel



“Sustainability is bloody hard work,” said Chef Michael Cooke of Camphors at Vergelegen. “But it’s an exciting time for chefs at the moment, with a lot of collaborations and taking on things like seed exchanges, feeding schemes, and now tackling mental health within the industry. It’s truly an honour to accept this award.”

Awards and accolades

Other awards included the *Eat Out* Retail Capital New Restaurant of the Year (Jewell’s Restaurant in Paarl); the *Eat Out* Nederburg Rising Star for Katlego Mlambo (The Marabi Club in Johannesburg); the *Eat Out* Bridget McCarney Game Changer Award (SA POC at the Table); the *Eat Out* Irna van Zyl Food Media Icon (Dorah Sitole); and the *Eat Out* Lannice Snyman Lifetime Achievement Award (Annette Kesler).



Eat Out Lannice Snyman Lifetime Achievement Award winner Annette Kesler with Tamsin Snyman

“I’m a bit speechless, which is quite extraordinary I know,” said Kesler, editor of showcook.com and founder of the annual Inter-Hotel Challenge.

“This is a real signal honour, and particularly when I think about Lannice and about the award. I want to thank each and every one who helped me along for nearly 50 years. The hospitality industry in South Africa is one of the most caring,

friendly and amazing industries where people can have careers that sustain them for life. And it's been a great privilege to be part of that.”

ABOUT EUGENE YIGA

Eugene graduated from the University of Cape Town with distinctions in financial accounting and classical piano. He then spent over two-and-a-half years working in branding and communications at two of South Africa's top market research companies. Eugene also spent over three-and-a-half years at an eLearning start-up, all while building his business as an award-winning writer. Visit www.eugenyiga.com, follow @eugenyiga on Twitter, or email hello@eugenyiga.com to say, um, hello.

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