

Celebrating South Africa's culinary rock stars at the *Eat Out* Mercedes-Benz Restaurant Awards

By  Eugene Yiga

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The annual *Eat Out* Mercedes-Benz Restaurant Awards took place at the GrandWest Grand Arena in Cape Town on Sunday, 18 November 2018. Hosted by Elana Afrika-Bredenkamp and Mi Casa's J'Something, the event that featured a multi-course lunch prepared by ten top chefs, as well as performances from the likes of Prime Circle and Karen Zoid, was another spectacular way to celebrate the rock stars of South Africa's culinary world.

"I'm immensely proud and hugely excited to say that this is our 20th year," said Aileen Lamb, MD of New Media, which owns *Eat Out*. "We have been celebrating the best of the best culinary talent in South Africa for two decades. Together we've achieved something special and I'm very proud."



Move over The Test Kitchen! The *Eat Out* Mercedes-Benz Restaurant Awards has a new #1

19 Nov 2018



The winner

[The Restaurant at Waterkloof](#) in Somerset West broke The Test Kitchen's six-year streak by claiming the top spot, up from third place last year. "I am definitely not prepared for this," said Chef Gregory Czarnecki. "This really means a lot, especially this year. It's definitely the highlight of my career. And never did I expect when we started nine years ago that we would rank this high. But here we are."



The runner up

Being ranked second place is still an achievement for [The Test Kitchen](#), which also won the *Eat Out* Diners Club Award for

Service Excellence. “Of course I’m disappointed that we haven’t won (first place) but at the end of the day it doesn’t matter,” said Chef Luke Dale-Roberts. “These awards mean a lot; don’t get me wrong. But what matters above all else is that we’re doing what we enjoy. I absolutely adore cooking. There’s not a day in my life that goes past when I don’t absolutely buzz from the fact that I can cook food and I can make people enjoy my food. That matters above all else.”



Third place

Third place went to [La Colombe](#) in Cape Town, up from seventh place last year, with its offshoot [La Petite Colombe](#) in Franschhoek ranking fifth. “What an incredible honour and privilege it is to receive this,” said Chef James Gaag. “Most importantly I’d like to thank Scot (Kirton). He’s given us an incredible opportunity and chance to put our own stamp on each of our own restaurants. And I am incredibly grateful and thankful.”



New look and refreshed menu for La Colombe

Ruth Cooper 5 Sep 2018





The biggest gain on the evening was [Wolfgang](#) in Paternoster, ranked fourth, a new entry last year. Chef Kobus van der Merwe, who won last year's inaugural *Eat Out* Graham Beck Chefs' Chef Award, also won the [Eat Out S.Pellegrino & Acqua Panna Chef of the Year](#).

"This is completely insane and so overwhelming," he said. "I don't see how a small kitchen in Paternoster can achieve this. I'm the biggest fan of all the other nominees and cannot be more in awe of what they do. This definitely goes to my team. They are everything; not even the most basic chores can happen without them. I think there's a lot of pressure on fine dining internationally as a concept; people are saying it's a dying breed. I don't think that's true. I think we are redefining it and it's cool to be recognised for that. It means a lot so thank you."



Making up the top 10, dominated by the Western Cape, are [Greenhouse at Cellars-Hohenort](#) Cape Town (sixth), [Restaurant Mosaic at The Orient](#) in Pretoria (seventh and winner of both the *Eat Out* Wine Service Award for Moses Magwaza and the *Eat Out* John Psillos Award for Outstanding Contribution to Service for Germain Lehodey), [Camphors at Vergelegen](#) in Somerset West (eighth), [Jardine Restaurant](#) in Stellenbosch (ninth), and [Chefs Warehouse at Beau Constantia](#) in Cape Town (10th and shared winner of the *Eat Out* Graham Beck Chefs' Chef Award for Ivor Jones).



The rest of the top twenty were [Fermier Restaurant](#) in Pretoria (11th), [Jordan Restaurant](#) in Stellenbosch (12th), [Foliage](#) in Franschhoek (13th and shared winner of the *Eat Out* Graham Beck Chefs' Chef Award for Chris Erasmus), [Le Coin Français](#) in Franschhoek (14th), [The Chefs' Table](#) in Durban (15th), [Chefs Warehouse at Maison](#) in Franschhoek (16th), [La Tête](#) in Cape Town (17th), [Overture](#) in Stellenbosch (18th), [The Shortmarket Club](#) in Cape Town (19th), and [The Pot Luck Club](#) in Cape Town (20th).



Other awards include the Woolworths Taste *Eat Out* Bursary (Thapelo Tsotsetsi), the *Eat Out* Nederburg Rising Star ([Candice Philip](#) of [Grei](#) in Johannesburg), the *Eat Out* Woolworths Sustainability Award ([The Werf Restaurant at Boschendal](#) in Franschhoek), the *Eat Out* Retail Capital New Restaurant of the Year ([Janse and Co.](#)), the *Eat Out* Visi Style Award ([Saint Restaurant](#) in Johannesburg), and the *Eat Out* Lannice Snyman Lifetime Achievement Award ([Abigail Donnelly](#)).

“Wow,” said Donnelly, former head judge of the awards and editor of *Taste* for the last 12 years. “This is such an absolute privilege. I’ve missed you guys this year and it’s been so difficult because I just love you all so much. The chefs and restaurateurs and waitrons and the entire industry have taken me on my journey. You’ve inspired me. Thank you. This is just the most incredible thing.”

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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.eugeneiyiga.com, follow @eugeneiyiga on Twitter, or email hello@eugeneiyiga.com to say, um, hello.

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