

David Hennigan wins UK Restaurant Manager of the Year 2010



]From left to right: David McHattie, chief executive of the National Skills Academy for Hospitality, David Hennigan 2010 Restaurant Manager of the Year, Academy of Food & Wine Patron Lord Thurso MP and Academy of Food & Wine president Roy Ackerman. Picture by Adrian Franklin.

David Hennigan, 40, of The Crown at Whitebrook and Celtic Manor in Monmouthshire, has won the 2010 UK Restaurant Manager of the Year competition following an exciting final held yesterday at Babylon restaurant at the Roof Gardens, London.

Michele Caggianese, restaurant manager at Galvin at Windows, London Hilton on Park Lane, was runner-up.

?I was very humbled to be chosen as a finalist, but then to be picked from this line-up of six such strong restaurant managers is incredible,? said David, following the announcement.

Liverpool-born David, who has worked in the industry for 24 years, manages both The Crown at Whitebrook and The Crown at Celtic Manor. He trained in Liverpool beginning as a commis waiter and went on to hold positions at the Lords of the Manor, Gloucestershire, and Hunstrete House near Bath.

The UK Restaurant Manager of the Year, organised by the Academy of Food & Wine and supported by the National Skills Academy for Hospitality, the Savoy Educational Trust and sponsored by OpenTable, sets out to find a top class restaurant manager with great business acumen, fantastic people skills, the ability to recruit, manage and motivate a team and who also has a thorough knowledge of the restaurant trade.

Every aspect of the competitors' skill was put to the test in a gruelling final that included a wine tasting, wine and food matching test, management skill scenario, and a task involving finding errors on a menu and mistakes in a room laid out ready for service. Each finalist was also asked to submit and present a written business plan for a new restaurant launch on which they were questioned by a panel of expert judges acting as would-be investors. This year's judges included top industry personalities Silvano Giralдин, formerly of Le Gavroche, Peter Avis, restaurant manager, Babylon at The Roof Gardens, London (last year's Restaurant Manager of the Year), and David Morgan-Hewitt, managing director, The Goring, London.

?David's written submission was very financially orientated and thorough ? he was the only finalist the panel would have invested its money in,? commented judge Paul Breach, vice chairman of the Academy of Food & Wine. ?David demonstrated to the judges that

he had a very broad skill set in food and wine, business and training. He is also a very good communicator. When challenged his answers were considered and knowledgeable.?

David receives a fabulous study-tour week in New York, staying at top Manhattan boutique hotel, The MAve, in the trendy Flatiron District to complete a stage at one of Danny Meyer's Union Square Hospitality Group properties. The Crown at Whitebrook will receive a complimentary 12-month subscription to the OpenTable reservation system.

As runner-up Michele Caggianese wins a week at the summer business school of the highly-acclaimed Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne in Switzerland, courtesy of the Savoy Educational Trust.

?One of our roles is to find excellence and promote it and to promote front-of-house as a highly skilled professional career, said Stephen Mannock, programme director for the National Skills Academy, who endorsed and supported the competition. ?The standard of this year's Restaurant Manager of the Year competitors was exceptionally high, but the winner demonstrated exactly what we were looking for. He will be a great ambassador for front-of-house as a professional career.?

The Restaurant Manager of the Year gala dinner also saw further industry stalwarts invited to join the Academy of Food & Wine's Restaurant Manager Hall of Fame: Alain Desenclos of Le Manoir aux Quat' Saisons; Jean Claude Bretonne, restaurant manager at Restaurant Gordon Ramsay; Sergio Rebecchi, director, Chez Nico Restaurants; Didier Garner, proprietor, Le Colombier Restaurant, London; Craig Bancroft, joint managing director, Northcote Group, Lancashire; and Peter Avis, restaurant manager, Babylon Restaurant, London, the 2009 Restaurant Manager of the Year.

They join the inaugural awardees Elena Salvoni of Elena's L'Etoile; Silvano Giraldin, formerly of Le Gavroche; Jesus Adorno, director and maitre d' of Le Caprice; Diego Masciaga, restaurant manager, Waterside Inn, Bray; and David Morgan-Hewitt, managing director of The Goring, London.

For further information or comment please contact Linda Pettit at Tilburstow Media Partners on 01737 823721, mobile 07973 789853 or email linda@tilburstowmedia.co.uk. Alternatively call the Academy of Food & Wine on 020 8661 4646.

EDITOR'S NOTES

About the Academy. Founded in 1988, the Academy of Food and Wine is the industry's professional training body dedicated to the skills of wine and food service. The Academy's purpose is to identify, promote and maintain the highest professional standards for the education and training of food and wine waiting staff and bar assistants in the UK hotel, restaurant, catering and bar industry.

Its objectives are: for every waiter/waitress, wine waiter and bar assistant in the industry to be a member of the Academy ? their professional body; to gain greater recognition for these operatives throughout the industry by accreditation, badging and recognition; to help members develop, maintain and advance their knowledge, skills and ability;

to provide an interface between educators, service staff and their employers; and to enhance member's career prospects. Currently the Academy has over 1,000 members.

About the Restaurant Manager of the Year competition. Following the initial submission of entry the judges selected the best entrants from five regions - The South, London, Wales & The Midlands, The North & Northern Ireland, and Scotland. These entrants were invited to attend a semi final where they were given three restaurant business scenarios by the judges and asked how they would handle each situation. They also completed a written questionnaire on all aspects of the restaurant business.

The six selected finalists, including the runner-up from last year's competition, were asked to submit a business plan for a new restaurant opening. Each presented and explained their plan to the panel of judges. The six finalists also completed a wine and food task and a service errors task.

Last year's Restaurant Manager of the Year was Peter Avis, restaurant manager at Babylon restaurant at the Roof Gardens, part of the Virgin Exclusive Collection.

The 2010 UK Restaurant Manager of the Year finalists:

- ? Mark Bevan, restaurant manager, Chester Grosvenor, Cheshire
- ? Michele Caggianese, restaurant manager, Galvin at Windows, Hilton on Park Lane, London W1
- ? David Hennigan, general manager, The Crown at Whitebrook, Monmouth
- ? Peter McAlister, brasserie manager, Malmaison Belfast
- ? Paul Shanahan, restaurant manager, Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons, Great Milton
- ? Sean Simpson, restaurant manager, Holiday Inn Glasgow

This year's panel of judges

- ? Peter Avis, restaurant manager, Babylon at The Roof Gardens, London (last year's Restaurant Manager of the Year winner)
- ? Gerard Basset MS, MW, technical director, Academy of Food & Wine and owner of Hotel TerraVina, Southampton
- ? Paul Breach, vice chairman, Academy of Food & Wine
- ? Nick Davies, F&B director, Red Carnation Hotels
- ? Silvano Giraldin, former maitre d' at Le Gavroche, now director of Roux Consulting
- ? Rémy Lysé, managing director, Rex Restaurant Associates
- ? Stephen Mannock, programme director, National Skills Academy for Hospitality
- ? David Morgan-Hewitt, managing director, The Goring, London
- ? Conor O'Leary, F&B director, The Hyatt Regency London - The Churchill, Academy of Food & Wine restaurant services director, chair of judges
- ? David Pritchard, managing director, Europe and senior vice president, Open Table
- ? Ronan Sayburn MS, director of wines & spirits, Hotel du Vin
- ? Nick Scade, chairman, Academy of Food & Wine
- ? Matt Wilkin MS, proprietor, Princess Victoria, London, wine director, Academy of Food & Wine.

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