

Michele Caggianese becomes UK Restaurant Manager of the Year



Michele Caggianese receives his award from Roy Ackerman, Fred Sirieix and Lord Thurso

Michele Caggianese, restaurant and bar manager of London's Jumeirah Carlton Tower was last night crowned as the Academy of Food and Wine Service's UK Restaurant Manager of the Year 2011.

This was the second year of trying for Italian-born Michele whose passion, dedication and charisma impressed the panel of judges. 'Michele has great food & beverage experience, is larger than life and will be a good role model for other restaurant managers. He has a real edge and a confidence that is inspiring to others,' commented chairman of the judges Conor O'Leary.

'It's amazing. This year the competition was more difficult than last year but I did more work for it. I decided to really go for it,' said an emotional Michele on being presented with his award at the Restaurant Managers' dinner at London's Corinthia hotel.

Runner-up was Paul Shanahan, assistant food & beverage director at the London Syon Park, Waldorf Astoria. 'It was a very close competition,' added O'Leary. 'Paul was extremely strong technically and his knowledge of food and wine was impressive. We hope to see him back next year.'

Seven finalists attended the day-long competition completing a wine and food matching exercise, a wine knowledge test and a training scenario in which they were asked to demonstrate the correct way to lay a restaurant table to a new member of staff. The finalists also had to present a business plan for their own restaurant concept to a Dragon's Den-style panel of judges. Their presentation included the marketing plan, profit and loss account for the first three years and a proposal for staffing and training.

The UK Restaurant Manager of the Year competition, supported by Hospitality Benchmark through the National Skills Academy for Hospitality, the Savoy Educational Trust and sponsored by OpenTable.com, seeks to find a restaurant manager who excels at front-of-house, has great people skills, the ability to manage and inspire a team and who can demonstrate a strong business acumen. Previous winners are David Hennigan, formerly of the Crown at Whitebrook, and Peter Avis, restaurant manager of Babylon restaurant, London.

As part of his prize Michele receives a week in New York to complete a stage at one of restaurateur Danny Meyer's Union Square Hospitality Group properties, staying in the top suite at trendy Manhattan boutique hotel The Mave, in the Flatiron District. The Jumeirah Carlton Tower receives a 12-month subscription to the OpenTable reservation system. The runner-up receives a place on a course at L'Ecole Hoteliere Lausanne, courtesy of the Savoy Educational Trust.

The line-up of judges for the 2011 competition included: Peter Avis of Babylon restaurant; Paul Breach of the Academy of Food and Wine Service; Nick Davies, food and beverage operations manager at Brown's; Silvano Giralдин, formerly of Le Gavroche and now

director of Roux Consulting; Rémy Lysé, managing director, Rex Restaurant Associates; Stephen Mannock of the National Skills Academy Hospitality; Conor O'Leary, director of F&B, Hyatt Regency London ? The Churchill; David Pritchard of OpenTable; 2009 Hotelier of the Year Jonathan Raggett, managing director of Red Carnation Hotels; Ronan Sayburn, director of wine at Hotel du Vin; and Matt Wilkin of H2Vin.

At the Restaurant Manager of the Year dinner four industry personalities were invited to join the Academy's Restaurant Manager Hall of Fame, sponsored by Lanson International. Fred Sirieix of Galvin at Windows, Enzo Cassini of Zafferano, Roberto Veneruzzo of Locando Locatelli and Richard Shepherd of Langan's Brasserie were praised for their commitment to the industry and for the high standards they have achieved in restaurant management. They join such luminaries on the Hall of Fame as Elena Salvoni of Elena's L'Etoile; Silvano Giraldin and Jesus Adorno, director and maitre d' of Le Caprice.

Pictured: Michele Caggianese receives his award. Left to right: Academy president Roy Ackerman, Fred Sirieix, Michele Caggianese, Lord Thurso, patron of AFWS.

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Editor's notes

About the Academy

The Academy of Food and Wine Service (AFWS) established in 1988, is the professional body for front-of-house service. It is dedicated to improving the status and awareness of food and beverage service as a viable career choice, raising standards across the industry, and by encouraging teamwork to foster good relations with other industry sectors. The Academy can offer advice and training to anyone following, or considering, a career as a sommelier, wine waiter, waiter, bar manager or restaurant manager. www.afws.co.uk.

About the competition

Following the submission of entry, CV, membership form, reference and written answers to questions, 15 entrants were invited to attend the semi final at the Westbury Hotel, Mayfair on 28 February. From this seven semi-finalists were selected to go forward to the final on 16 May 2011.

The seven finalists for 2011 were:

Damien Bastiat, restaurant manager, Gidleigh Park, Devon

Michele Caggianese, restaurant & bar manager, Jumeirah Carlton Tower, London (last year's runner-up)

Nicolas Chesneau, restaurant manager, La Becasse, Ludlow, Shropshire

Shaun Corrigan, restaurants manager, The Grand Jersey

Markus Ludewig, restaurant manager, One Aldwych, London

Peter McAlister, brasserie manager, Malmaison Hotel, Belfast

Paul Shanahan, assistant food & beverage director, London Syon Park, Waldorf Astoria

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