

New show will light up talent and celebrate industry's best

This year's national hospitality show may be smaller but it will certainly have plenty of punch according to the New Zealand Restaurant Association. The Association announced today a three-year strategic plan to revitalise and redevelop the national hospitality show, formerly known as HospitalityNZ, to bring it into line with what the industry wants. Association CEO Steve Mackenzie says with public interest in the hospitality sector running at an all time high and with the Rugby World Cup here next year, there couldn't be a better time to showcase the talent the industry has while at the same time provide an opportunity to attract new people.

“Hospitality is a cornerstone industry of the New Zealand economy, and its contribution to our nation's social fibre is incredibly important. But we need to grow that industry and what better way than through our show. It will be the only major hospitality show open to the general public. They will be able to see everything from delicate culinary sculpture to the flamboyant skills of some of our top bartenders. The show encompasses culinary arts, front of house, bar, hotel, education and careers and from this year will be forged around competition. “The pots and pans, the trading side of the show, have gone so that we can focus on the people. We want to celebrate and reward the true stars of this industry – its people.”

Mackenzie says: “This year the show will be held in three separate locations as we adjust the focus towards the core elements: National Culinary Fare, MasterClasses and Feast. The ASB Showgrounds will play venue for the Culinary Fare and SKYCITY will host Feast while the Association's professional development centre, taste, will provide a more suitable setting for the MasterClasses. WineNZ will take a break this year, as we develop a more comprehensive and encompassing beverage component to the show.”

“The last three months have been spent talking to industry stakeholders, as well as hospitality business owners around the country. From their feedback we now have a good understanding of what the Restaurant Association's show needs to become in order to support and promote the industry. And already plans are underway to ensure this happens starting right away with this year's show,” says Mackenzie.

“One of the things we realised was we needed to extend our coverage beyond Auckland. So with that in mind we're breaking with tradition and taking our MasterClasses on the road. We're planning to hold a number of MasterClass events around the country where we can share these experiences with not just Aucklanders, but with the rest of New Zealand.”

August will see the first MasterClasses staged in Auckland and Wellington followed by another scheduled for November. And while Mackenzie is not giving too much away, he says there is some exciting talent lined up.”

The Association is confident the new show format will be more in tune with where the industry is heading. “We have presented an opportunity to industry stakeholders to help us create an annual event that is for the industry; presented by the industry. This is our chance to create an environment where we showcase hospitality talent to both the trade and public. And for us, it is an opportunity to recognise the best in their field.”

Mackenzie says one of the intentions of the three-year strategy is to provide events throughout the year around the country as a continuation of the show such as holding the MasterClasses in other regions, and work is also well underway for next year’s show.

The NZ Restaurant Association represents 1600 members throughout New Zealand who employ around 13,000 full and part-time employees.

The new Restaurant Association’s Show runs from **August 22 -24** and will be held at the ASB Showgrounds in Greenlane, Auckland; SKYCITY, Auckland, and taste Auckland.

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