



Knives and Spatulas Down! NZ Hospitality Championships Complete for Another Year with Record Number of Competitors

No bed has been left unmade, no mushroom left unchopped and all the meat has been expertly seared as more than 800 competitors have cooked their hearts out at the NZ Hospitality Championships 2017.

Held at the Logan Campbell Centre alongside the popular Food Show over 4 days from the 27th to the 30th of July, challengers from primary school age in the Kiwi Kids Can Cook competition to professional chefs competed in over 74 classes in the hope of being named a winner.

Special guest at the Championships this year was Thomas Gugler, WorldChefs President, in his first visit to New Zealand. Touching down in the country, he was welcomed with a rousing powhiri from the Auckland Maori Rugby Team, including a hongi with one of the players – something new for the German native. In his time in New Zealand visiting what he called the “most prestigious [hospitality] competition in New Zealand”, he judged the hotly contested Nestlé Toque d’Or tertiary competition which he hoped to look for something special, cooked from scratch.

Another highlight from the first day of competition was the most popular class of the whole competition, the Live Training Salmon class sponsored by Akaroa, where 19 competitors from culinary training institutes around New Zealand cooked up some top notch salmon dishes. And of course the Nestlé Toque d’Or competition, eagerly fought over by 30 challengers, was a thrill. The winners, as judged by Thomas Gugler and a team of professional judges, were the team from Toi Ohomai Rotorua.

Friday saw the arrival of secondary school students from Whangarei to Southland, and a team from Australia, to contest a range of classes including Live Café Sandwich, Live Omelette (attempted the day before by the 1 Breakfast team, to hilarious results) and Live Classic Table Setting. The winner of the Secondary Student of the Year was Mary Vaikai, from Manurewa High School.

The weekend saw the arrival of the hospitality professionals to battle it out in the open classes. Lattés were turned into works of art, tables were set to perfection with fork, knives and spoons lined up to within a millimetre of straight. The teams in the Dilmah High Tea competition created a table set for a queen, with treats that looked faultless. The biggest cheers and excitement were reserved for the Deer Industry NZ, Queen, vegetables.co.nz and Fonterra Three Course Challenge – one of the classes that determined the Moffat Chef of the Year, where competitors had to serve up a cheese entrée, main and dessert to the discerning judges.

Sunday saw both the young and old involved with the kick off for the national final of Kiwi Kids Can Cook with kids from year 1 to year 8 cooking up a storm – with Grace Thompson from Auckland making an incredible crayfish dish that led to her winning the grand prize in a tense final. Then chefs from aged care homes around the country took to the kitchen for the Senior Lifestyle Competition.

One of the most popular classes of the event, the Waitoa Curry Cup, drew the crowds in the afternoon with their tasting spoons at the ready.

All the competitors' hard work was recognised on Sunday at the prize-giving, with Eric Lim from Christchurch's Chillingworth Road being crowned the Moffat Chef of the Year. Commis Chef of the Year went to Zachariah Meads and Apprentice of the Year went to Nicholas Todd. Skyline Rotorua also did well, claiming Barista of the Year and Service Person of the Year for Dhrumil Oza and Marketa Jelinkova respectively.

Other major prize winners include:

Training Chef of the Year (Blue Rock) – Sio Sio Wong

Pastry Chef of the Year (Hospitality Business) – Lakmal Anuradh, Wairakei Resort Taupo

Junior Pastry Chef of the Year (Equagold) – Sam Heaven, Sky City Auckland

Secondary School Student of the Year (AUT) – Mary Vaikai

Service IQ Secondary School Excellence Award – Manurewa High School

NZ Training Establishment of the Year (HTT) – The Cornell Education Group

See nzchefs.org.nz for a full list of results.

The NZ Hospitality Championships are held annually to showcase the talent of New Zealand's hospitality industry, which would not be possible without our sponsors. It is run in association with NZ Chefs who are the "National Association" supporting and representing Chefs across NZ from school age to mature practitioners. They provide many opportunities for their members at local, national and international level to showcase their creativity and skills in the public arena.

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For more information or hi-res photography please contact:

Rosie Harris, Commando

Email rosie@commandoltd.co.nz