

2023 Eat Out Woolworths Restaurant Award winners

A burst of confetti at Cape Town's GrandWest Grand Arena on Sunday 19 November concluded the much-anticipated 2023 Eat Out Woolworths Restaurant Awards ceremony, where over 800 guests gathered to celebrate South Africa's culinary excellence.



Restaurant of the Year: La Colombe. Image supplied

Embracing the star-rating system introduced in 2022, South Africa's top restaurants were awarded with 3, 2 or 1 stars following a meticulous judging process led by chief judge Abigail Donnelly. The criteria spanned the entire spectrum of the dining experience – from decor and ambience to service, the wine list and the quality of the ingredients – with restaurants needing to score between 70 and 79 out of 100 to win 1 star, between 80 and 89 to win 2 stars, and over 90 to win 3 stars.

Donnelly says: "This year's winners have demonstrated a seamless combination of consistency and quality, coupled with a commitment to progression and experimentation. We have seen the young and upcoming shine and the established legends generously imparting their wisdom, fostering a wonderful spirit of mentorship within the community.

"The celebrated establishments tonight have fearlessly articulated their visions, captivating guests with exciting ingredients, unique spaces, exquisite service and a sincere love of their craft."

1-Star Restaurants

- Acid Food & Wine Bar (Randburg, Johannesburg)
- Cavalli Restaurant (Somerset West)
- Chefs Warehouse at Maison (Franschhoek)
- Chorus(Somerset West)
- Creation Wines Tasting Room (Hemel-en-Aarde Valley)
- Eike (Stellenbosch)
- Faber at Avondale (Paarl)
- Farro (Botrivier)
- Fermier (Pretoria)
- Le coin Français (Franschhoek)
- Les Créatifs Restaurant (Bryanston, Johannesburg)
- Madre Stanford (Stanford)
- Orangerie at Le Lude (Franschhoek)
- Ouzeri (City Bowl, Cape Town)
- Post & Pepper (Stellenbosch)
- Protégé (Franschhoek)
- Proud Mary (Rosebank, Johannesburg)
- Rykaart's (Stellenbosch)
- Séjour (Houghton Estate, Johannesburg)
- The Chefs' Table (Umhlanga, eThekweni)
- The Melting Pot (Elgin)
- The Red Room by Chefs Warehouse (City Bowl, Cape Town)
- The Table at De Meyer (Stellenbosch)
- The Test Kitchen Fledgelings (Woodstock Cape Town)
- The Waterside Restaurant (V&A Waterfront, Cape Town)
- Upper Union (City Bowl, Cape Town)
- Zioux (Sandton, Johannesburg)

2-Star Restaurants

- Belly of the Beast (City Bowl, Cape Town)
- beyond (Constantia, Cape Town)
- ëlgr (City Bowl, Cape Town)
- Epice (Franschhoek)
- Foxcroft (Constantia, Cape Town)
- Meraki by Charlie Lakin (Hillcrest, eThekweni)
- Nevermind (Cape St Francis)
- Pier (V&A Waterfront, Cape Town)
- Restaurant Klein JAN (Tswalu)
- Rust en Vrede (Stellenbosch)
- Salon (Woodstock, Cape Town)
- Spek & Bone (Stellenbosch)
- The Jordan Restaurant with Marthinus Ferreira (Stellenbosch)
- The LivingRoom at Summerhill Estate (Pinetown, eThekweni)
- The Pot Luck Club Cape Town (Woodstock, Cape Town)
- The Pot Luck Club Johannesburg (Randburg, Johannesburg)
- Wolfgat (Paternoster)

3-Star Restaurants

- Arkeste by Richard Carstens (Franschhoek)
- Chefs Warehouse Beau Constantia (Constantia, Cape Town)
- Dusk (Stellenbosch)
- Fyn (City Bowl, Cape Town)
- La Colombe (Constantia, Cape Town)
- La Petite Colombe (Franschhoek)
- Salsify at The Roundhouse (Camps Bay, Cape Town)

Eat Out brand custodian Aileen Lamb says: “Fifty-one restaurants were in that elite group of starred restaurants this year, an increase from last year’s 42 and testament to our restaurant industry continuing to evolve and ascend to new heights. What a privilege it was to eat out in 2023! Thank you to Abigail and her judging panel – Joseph Dhafana, Marisa Munroe, Mokgadi Itsweng, Herman Lensing and Karen Dudley – for their dedication to highlighting the best of the best and pushing the industry forward.”

Special Awards

In addition to the starred restaurants, 14 special awards were handed out to individual restaurants, chefs and food personalities.

Roy Bagattini, Woolworths Holdings’ Group Chief Executive Officer, says: “At Woolworths, we’re committed to innovation, sustainability and sourcing the finest ingredients. We saw these values in all the winners this year, and that makes us very proud to be the headline sponsor of the Eat Out Woolworths Restaurant Awards. The restaurant industry delivers a significant contribution across several economic touchpoints – including formal and informal employment, marketing, supplier procurement, and property rental. Many people rely on it for their livelihoods. Which is why these awards matter. When a restaurant or chef or sommelier wins, the industry wins too – and that, in turn, delivers a boost to the food and beverages supply chain as a whole.”

La Colombe in Constantia was awarded Eat Out Woolworths Restaurant of the Year, having attained the highest score of any restaurant in the country. The judges said: “La Colombe is an institution on South Africa’s fine-dining scene. It has been a consistent award winner, both locally and internationally, offering a menu that is executed with impeccable precision and attention to detail.”

Executive chef James Gaag says: “I am so proud of my entire team. We worked incredibly hard for this and all the effort and time they put into it is rewarded. I might be receiving this Award on behalf of the restaurant, but it goes to all of them.”

The Eat Out Woolworths Financial Services Chef of the Year award went to Ryan Cole, the head chef and co-owner of Salsify at The Roundhouse in Camps Bay. The judges said: “Ryan demonstrates a high degree of creativity and displays a passion for driving the local food scene forward. This is a chef at the height of his powers.”

Cole’s peers agreed, awarding him the Eat Out Birkenstock Chef’s Chef of the Year Award. All the star winners from 2022 were invited to vote, and this accolade not only acknowledges Cole’s culinary achievements but also underscores his role as a source of inspiration and leadership within the restaurant community.

Cole says: I am humbled and honoured and overjoyed. I think that winning Chef’s Chef is like a dream come true. I think that winning Chef of the Year, you can’t plan for that. Being seen by my peers and my colleagues and Eat Out as somebody that is paving the way for future generations is a massive compliment. I also think it’s a feather in Eat Out’s cap as it shows that they are on trend and in line with what Industry is saying and feeling.”

The Eat Out Valpré Rising Star Award went to Anwar Abdullatief of The Happy Uncles in Salt River. The judges said: “Here we award a young chef doing amazing things in the restaurant industry. It’s recognising someone with a future-forward approach, someone who is innovative, breaking down barriers and exploring new ways of working with food.”

Abdullatief says: “I’ve had to make a lot of sacrifices for my business, from working without a salary for months to cutting down on my family time. So being and acknowledged by a reputable platform such as the Eat Out Woolworths Restaurant Awards is a validating experience. This will undoubtedly open many doors for my business and transform it to the next level.”

The remaining special award winners were:

Eat Out Woolworths Sustainability Award: The LivingRoom at Summerhill Estate (Pinetown, eThekweni)

The judges said: “It is a restaurant that makes conscious decisions about sustainability ALL the time.”

Eat Out Woolworths Financial Services Service Excellence Award: Meraki by Charlie Lakin (Hillcrest, eThekweni)

The judges said: “There was a breath of fresh air about the service in this small restaurant. Yes, all the elements of excellent service were there: impeccable attention to detail, finesse, anticipating the guests’ needs. But the polished professionalism was tempered with something rather special: a gentle humility and a human connection that touched our judges.”

Eat Out Woolworths Wine Service Award: Bafana Zondo, Dusk (Stellenbosch)

The judges said: “He has an ability to read and appreciate the diners at his table like no other – and, therefore, is able to perfectly pitch his descriptions of the wines he offers, making his diners feel both at ease and enriched. There is no showing off ... no pretention ... no grandeur ... just a reassuring sense that this person is really worth listening to.”

Eat Out Lexus Style Award: Restaurant Klein JAN (Tswalu)

The judges said: “You enter through a concealed door in what appears to be corrugated-iron reservoir. But what it really is a portal to another world.”

Eat Out Retail Capital Best New Restaurant Award: Boma on Bree (City Bowl, Cape Town)

The judges said: “It’s eclectic in its cuisine. It offers a menu lovingly cooked over coals. It has a refreshing selection of tequila and mezcal-based cocktails. And it’s a total vibe.”

Eat Out Highland Park Lannice Snyman Lifetime Achievement Award: Germain Lehodey

The judges said: “He was the South Africa’s first accredited sommelier, earning the title during the late 70s in Europe, where he was also Switzerland’s first accredited sommelier. Moving to South Africa, over the next four decades he has been instrumental in elevating our wines, our wine industry and, of course, the key position of sommelier.”

Eat Out Cacao Barry Dessert Award: Motheba Makhetha, The Jordan Restaurant (Stellenbosch)

The judges said: “Our judges were blown away by her bold cheese-slash-dessert course, that included surprising delights such as Padrón pepper jam, pistachio sponge, cherry guavas and goat’s cheese snow.”

Eat Out Patrón Mixology Award: La Petite Colombe (Franschhoek)

The judges said: “Their cocktails are phenomenal, and there is true innovation in their alternative, non-alcoholic drinks menu.”

Eat Out Lexus Best Destination Award: Wolfgat (Paternoster)

The judges said: “With a modest thatched cottage exterior that belies the gastronomic wonders within, and perched on a rugged South African coastline, it offers an intimate dining experience amid panoramic views of the Atlantic and the rhythmic sounds of crashing waves.”

Eat Out Woolworths Trailblazer Award: Siba Mtongana, SIBA – The Restaurant (V&A Waterfront, Cape Town)

The judges said: “Through her restaurant, our winner tonight not only showcases a unique culinary identity, but her success goes beyond the kitchen, actively promoting inclusivity and diversity in the industry, and inspiring a new generation of chefs.”

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