

Fine Dining Awards Programme reaches new heights

The number and diversity of new restaurants entering the American Express Platinum Fine Dining Awards Programme has significantly increased over recent years.

American Express strives for consistency, excellence and relevance in everything they do. The annual American Express Platinum Fine Dining Awards Programme, now in its 17th year, is the epicurean expression of this corporate philosophy.

Convenor of the American Express culinary judging panel, Tamsin Snyman, explains that the awards 'recognise the enormous artistic, social and business contribution that our finest chefs and restaurants make to South African life. The hospitality industry plays a key role in our economy and our collective emotional wellbeing. It is a pleasure and a privilege to be part of something that recognises this role.'



The programme's rigorous judging methodology reflects the serious nature of the task at hand. Restaurant standards are annually re-evaluated by the judges and their panel of experienced ghost reviewers. Awards are not renewed automatically and consistent quality is a must. Fellow judge Anna Trapido observes that 'it is no good just rubber-stamping restaurants year after year or flattering chefs. We would never do that. American Express Card members seek to spend hard-earned money on quality experiences, which is why strict, educated, annual assessments are essential.'

Tamsin says that the panel is 'particularly proud that we are at the forefront of redefining notions of fine dining in a modern, international context. For many years' fine dining meant silver service and French food, but excellence can - and indeed does - exist across a wide spectrum of styles, ethnicities and ambiances. South Africa is a multicultural and dynamic country. Our food industry professionals are well travelled and internationally relevant, but also rooted in a national and regional culinary identity. The good news is that our best restaurants reflect this diversity, sense of place and modernity.'

They reveal so much about who we are and where we are going as a nation.'

Two delicious demonstrations of who we are and where we are going took place at the Jubilee Hall at the V&A Waterfront in Cape Town on 7 September and Katy's Palace Bar in Johannesburg on 14 September as American Express revealed the Platinum Fine Dining Programme results for 2016.

This year 100 restaurants were honoured for consistent, superb standards. Eight of these also received the prestigious 10-year award. Four restaurants were reinstated on the programme after having failed to meet the required standard in 2015. We are delighted about their return to form.

The American Express judging panel is increasingly committed to seeking out previously unknown gastronomic gems - as is evidenced by the fact that the number of new restaurants entering the programme has more than doubled since last year.

'We are delighted to see that our iconic chefs are being joined by an exciting cadre of young chefs rising through the ranks,' said Pamela White, Head of Corporate Card for American Express.

'As the exclusive issuer and merchant acquirer of American Express Cards in South Africa, the Nedbank Make Things Happen ethos is demonstrated daily in our country's kitchens and on our restaurant plates. Discerning American Express clients expect distinctive client experiences. They recognise the skill and class inherent in fine dining, and value its creativity and care. The chefs and restaurateurs recognised in our programme have shown innovation, expertise and tireless dedication to their industry. Every day they reflect local needs and global trends. That is what our brand is all about.'

View the full list of [American Express Platinum Fine Dining Awards Programme for 2016](#)

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