

PRESS NOTICE

TOP TEN FINALISTS OF THE BASQUE CULINARY WORLD PRIZE ANNOUNCED TODAY

San Sebastian.

Chefs representing ten different countries were named today as top ten finalists for the Basque Culinary World Prize 2019, an award for trailblazing chefs whose work has had an impact “beyond the kitchen”.

For three months earlier this year, gastronomic professionals and institutions nominated chefs from around the globe, known and unknown, who demonstrated how gastronomy could become a transformational force in areas such as technology, education, environment, health, food production or on social or economic development.

In this 4th edition of the prize– which is organised and promoted by the Basque Government under the Euskadi-Basque Country Strategy and the Basque Culinary Center (BCC), the world’s leading gastronomic research and teaching institution– 230 nominations were received from 42 countries (a total of 150 chefs nominated), making it the edition of the prize with the widest participation to date.

The ten top finalists:

Selassie Atadika (Ghana); Mario Castrellón (Panama), Siew-Chinn Chin (Malaysia- USA); Giovanni Cuocci (Italy); Xanty Elias (Spain); Virgilio Martínez (Peru); Cristina Martínez (Mexico - USA); Douglas McMaster (United Kingdom); Anthony Myint (USA); Lars Williams (USA – Denmark)

These ten names reflect a movement led by inspiring and game-changer chefs such as Ferran Adrià, José Andrés, Dan Barber, Massimo Bottura, Claus Mayer, Jamie Oliver, and Alice Waters who have for decades assumed responsibility to make a positive impact on society. They were chosen by a Technical Committee formed of leading academic and culinary experts representing elite global institutions including Harvard University, Copenhagen University, Open University of Catalonia, and the University of the Basque Country.

The winner will be chosen by an international jury comprised of the world’s most acclaimed chefs and interdisciplinary experts from a variety of fields related to gastronomy during the ninth annual meeting of the Basque Culinary Center International Council in San Francisco. The announcement will be made on July 16, 2019 during a symposium co-hosted by three-Michelin-starred chef Dominique Crenn entitled “Sustainable Thinking” with this year’s theme focusing on how gastronomy can propel the sustainability agenda– whether through technological improvements to lower emissions or changing consumer habits. For more information, please visit (sanfrancisco2019.bculinary.com).

The Jury will be chaired by chef Joan Roca (Spain) and will include celebrated chefs such as Andoni Luis Aduriz (Basque Country), Eneko Axata (Basque Country), Massimo Bottura (Italy), Manu Buffara (Brazil), Katina and Kyle Connaughton (USA), Dominique Crenn (USA), Trine Hahnemann (Denmark), Yoshihiro Narisawa (Japan), Enrique Olvera (Mexico), and Jock Zonfrillo (Australia)- the incumbent BCWP 2019 winner.

The winner will be awarded €100,000 to devote to a cause that expresses the ethos of the prize: to transform society through gastronomy.

Bittor Oroz, Basque Government Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Fishing and Food Policy, noted that:

"This fourth Basque Culinary World Prize is necessary to consolidate and continue promoting the values of excellence, commitment, quality and dedication to transformation pursued by the award. Within the framework of the comprehensive Euskadi-Basque Country strategy, the Basque Culinary World Prize has contributed to the Basque Country continuing to be an international benchmark for excellence in gastronomy and presenting itself as a country with an exemplary model of quality of life and social cohesion, and an innovative and competitive territory".

Joxe Mari Aizega, General Director of the Basque Culinary Center, for his part pointed out that:

"Professionals and institutions in the gastronomic sector from different parts of the planet have participated, helping us to discover a great variety of inspiring personalities, whose work demonstrates the social impact of gastronomy when it is part of a broad and diverse movement. In its fourth year, the Basque Culinary World Prize confirms its importance with the highest level of participation and involvement to date, more nominations and greater scope, and above all, with the consolidation of a multiplier effect".

In discussing this year's nominees, Pia Sørensen, director of the Science and Cooking program of Harvard University, said:

"The list of finalists highlights the important and innovative work being done by chefs from diverse regions and in a range of highly current fields connected to gastronomy, not only as a source of inspiration but as a tangible and concrete expression of how this collective is taking action".

The Top Ten Finalists Biographies:

Selassie Atadika

Selassie is opening doors of opportunity for Ghana through food. After spending a decade working for the UN— she holds a degree in International Affairs from Columbia University— Selassie jumped into the kitchen to explore how food could tackle social challenges, eventually graduating from the Culinary Institute of America (CIA). She returned to Africa to open the restaurant Midunu in Accra in 2014 where she has cultivated the concept of New African Cuisine. Leading an all female team, Selassie is investigating and surveying Africa's vast and diverse culinary legacy. She hopes that her staff and her work will inspire more women to move beyond their traditional roles as home cooks and bearers of culinary tradition and venture into professions in Africa's fine dining industry.

Mario Castrellón

Mario Castrellón internationally promotes Panama's under-explored gastronomic culture. Through his role as an entrepreneur, he creates opportunities for social development in coffee-farming communities. Today these communities produce Geisha, one of the most exclusive and coveted coffee varieties in the world. Yet cultivation of this crop has not exacerbated the region's poverty, nor led to harmfully excessive production. The Maíto chef promotes fair trade, professional training and job opportunities for producers and women who are in vulnerable situations.

Siew-Chinn Chin

Siew-Chinn Chin, who has devoted her career to promoting organic and healthy eating habits in the US, is advocating for a paradigm shift away from fast food culture. Through initiatives such as "The Charlie Cart Project", the Malaysian-born chef plays a key role taking culinary training across the country: using a fully-equipped mobile kitchen and dozens of recipes to illustrate the connections between cooking, health and the environment. She has trained over 500 educators from around 10 states, through which an estimated 150,000 children have also completed their curriculum.

Giovanni Cuocci

On the outskirts of Modena, Cuocci uses cooking to care for his region and the people around him. In his cooperative-farm-turned-restaurant, *La lanterna di Diogene*, he partners with people with intellectual disabilities who grow, prepare and serve the very best of Emilia Romagna's artisanal cuisine. This inspiring and innovative gastronomic-social cooperative transforms food not only into delicious dishes but also into new opportunities for its members. The chef has created a workplace that allows normal professional interactions with one of the most invisible and neglected groups in our society, while also showcasing the true value of their talents and capabilities.

Xanty Elías

The chef of Acánthum, the only restaurant in Huelva (Spain) to boast a Michelin star, is fully committed to developing his region. As president of the Prenauta Foundation, he is an advocate for tourism, innovation and entrepreneurship in the restaurant sector. In order to promote food education, he launched *Los Niños se Comen el Futuro* in 2018 (which can be loosely translated as "The Children Eat and Conquer the Future"). This initiative is striving to introduce Culinary Culture as a subject on the curriculum in primary schools. A pilot program (in 2018-2019) was implemented in 50 schools across the region of Andalusia, completed by 2,200 students between the ages of six and seven.

Cristina Martinez

In the United States, the fear of deportation silences more than one million undocumented workers a year; and yet, in Philadelphia, this Hispanic chef is leveraging the success of her South Philly Barbecue restaurant (among the best openings of 2016, according to *Bon Appétit*) to give voice to the controversial struggle of those who work without papers in Donald Trump's America. She has led the initiative #Right2Work to promote a public dialogue about the conditions for undocumented workers in the restaurant industry and to generate meeting spaces for exchanging information and support for those who need it most. The Mayor of Philadelphia, Jim Kenney, awarded her the Nationalities Service Award for her fight for immigrant rights and for her contribution to making the city a celebrated gastronomic destination. Inspired partly by her work, the local council has now passed a resolution that recognizes work as a human right, regardless of a person's immigration status.

Virgilio Martínez

Virgilio Martínez links Peruvian cuisine with exploration and innovation. Through his work with *Mater Iniciativa*, a multi-disciplinary biological and social research centre, Martínez is pushing the boundaries of how society understands and relates to environmental and social issues. Biodiversity is one focal area for the centre. By collaborating with agrarian communities in isolated areas, his team explores underused, native ingredients and the stories behind them. Their findings feed into Martínez's flagship *Central Restaurante* (2009) based in Lima, Peru, considered to be one of the best restaurant in Latin America. With *Mil* (2018), his most recent endeavour in Cuzco— propped at an altitude of 3,500 meters facing the Inca ruins of Moray—he is redefining how chefs engage and partner with indigenous communities by promoting sustainable agricultural practices, knowledge exchange and a multicultural dialogue.

Douglas McMaster

Through Silo, the first zero-waste restaurant in the United Kingdom, Douglas has spearheaded a movement that is now an international phenomenon. He draws inspiration from the "pre-industrial food system," a concept that is motivating young chefs around the world. This approach allows nothing to go to waste: instead, everything is reused. He advocates for 'upcycling' – reusing materials to create a product of higher quality than the original – over recycling.

He has demonstrated that waste only exists because we do not know what to do with certain parts of ingredients, and that cooking can help alter consumption patterns in favour of greater sustainability, not just as a mere slogan, but as a reality.

Anthony Myint

Through conviction, persistence and creativity, Anthony Myint uses cooking to tackle one of the most pressing challenges in today's global society: climate change. Based in San Francisco, he directs initiatives such as ZeroFoodprint that draw attention to the environmental impact of restaurants and provides tools for chefs to reduce or eliminate their businesses' carbon footprint, regardless of location. Over 30 influential restaurants from around the globe, such as Benu and Noma, have applied this methodology. Meanwhile, his Perennial Farming Initiative promotes sustainable agriculture practices.

Lars Williams

Lars Williams, the Copenhagen-based former director of the Nordic Food Lab, illustrates a novel approach to innovation. Through the eyes of a chef, he transposes culinary concepts to the world of distilled spirits at the company *Empirical Spirits*. The business aims to "capture flavours from around the world" through cutting-edge distillation and fermentation techniques. He also collaborates with activist and educator Chido Govera, the founder of Future of Hope in Zimbabwe. Together, they promote innovative ideas designed to empower local communities to explore the potential of their untapped culinary resources ranging from wild fruits to termites. They transform them into unique food products capable of generating economic value, fostering community identity and captivating global markets.

In previous years, the prize has been won by Jock Zonfrillo (BCWP 2018) for dedicating 18 years to discover and defend the ancient food culture of Australia's native people, which has been largely excluded from the national culinary identity; Leonor Espinosa (BCWP 2017) for her work with indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities to transform their biological, cultural and intangible heritage into tools for socio-economic development; and María Fernanda Di Giacobbe (BCWP 2016), who has built a whole chain of education, entrepreneurship, and economic development around Venezuelan cacao.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. The Basque Culinary World Prize is an award created by the Basque Government under the Euskadi-Basque Country Strategy and the Basque Culinary Center. This country brand, which is based on Basque strengths and singularities, positions Euskadi as a global player, as a benchmark for excellence, as a model of quality of life and social cohesion, and as an innovative and competitive country. The Basque Culinary Center Foundation was established in San Sebastian in 2009; it concentrates its efforts on creating an interdisciplinary space that contributes to the professionalisation of the gastronomic sector.
2. Nominations were open from February- May 2019 for chefs, not projects, whose work has transformed society through gastronomy. The BCWP encourages nominating chefs of any nationality, regardless of their level of fame or recognition. To be considered for the award, chefs had to be nominated by another professional currently working in the world of gastronomy - for instance, another chef, food writer or food supplier, or an institution. The members of both the Jury and the Technical Committee can not be nominated for the prize.
3. The 2019 Technical Committee was formed of Dr. Iñaki Martínez de Albéniz, professor of Sociology at the University of the Basque Country; Jorge Ruiz Carrascal, professor of the Department of Food Science at the University of Copenhagen; Xavier Medina, social anthropologist and director of the UNESCO Chair on Food, Culture and Development; Pia Sørensen, director of the Science and Cooking program of Harvard University; and Carlos Zamora, chef at the helm of De Luz and seven other restaurants in Spain. For more information on the members of the jury, technical committee, or the mechanics of the award, go to the website www.basqueculinaryworldprize.com
4. Longer versions of the Top 10 biographies are available at www.basqueculinaryworldprize.com
5. A short video summarising the 2019 edition of the Basque Culinary World Prize is available [here](#). Media organisations are invited to use and share this video.

6. Basque Culinary World Prize photos are available [here](#), photos of the Top 10 finalists are available [here](#), and videos of the Top 10 are available [here](#).
7. For media requests please contact Alex Jungwirth: alex.jungwirth@apollostrategiccomms.com
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