



ECKART WITZIGMANN - "CHEF OF THE CENTURY"

When the French restaurant guide "Gault & Millau" awarded Eckart Witzigmann the title of "Cook of the Century" in 1994, he joined the rarefied ranks of the world's greatest living chefs. Indeed, the accolade has previously only been bestowed on three other people: Paul Bocuse, Joël Robuchon and Frédy Girardet. The greatest acknowledgement in the culinary world, it has not been awarded since 1994, and the fact that it has gone to a non-French chef bears witness to Eckart Witzigmann's considerable standing, not to mention the high esteem in which he is held.

Eckart Witzigmann was born in Austria in 1941 and has grown up in Bad Gastein. He trained in the best catering establishments in the world, and his outstanding talent was promoted by the best names in the business. Paul Bocuse, Paul Simon, Roger Vergé, the Troisgros brothers and particularly Paul Haeberlin have all acknowledged Witzigmann's exceptional talent and supported him in his unique career.

In addition to prolonged stays in France, Eckart Witzigmann amassed considerable international experience in the most prestigious restaurants in the world. These include the "Operakällaren" in Stockholm, the "Cafe Royal" in London, the "Villa Lorraine" in Brussels and the "Jockey Club" in Washington D.C. Witzigmann spent a total of 13 years abroad before coming to Germany in 1971 and initiating a culinary revolution at the "Tantris" restaurant in Munich. To this day, the public distinguishes between two periods: before Witzigmann and after Witzigmann. In 1978, Witzigmann opened his own restaurant, the legendary "Aubergine" in Munich, which went on to become a nucleus for exceptional German culinary creativity. Artists, royalty and connoisseurs from all over the world were drawn there in great numbers to experience and savour Eckart Witzigmann's creative and culinary skills.

In 1979, the "Aubergine" became the first restaurant in Germany – and Eckart Witzigmann one of only three chefs worldwide – to be awarded the much-coveted three stars from Michelin.

Every year since, the award went to Eckart Witzigmann – that is until 1993. At the pinnacle of his success, Witzigmann decided it was time to leave the limelight, commenting at the time "I think this is as good as I can ever be". "The mother of all chefs", as he is respectfully referred to by his pupils, not only garnered considerable respect for his art but he also passionately and consistently passed on his knowledge to his numerous employees – indeed, the term 'Witzigmann pupil' has become something of a saying, even outside the culinary world. For Eckart Witzigmann, this is absolutely no reason to rest on his laurels, and he has subsequently become one of the most successful cookery book authors of the last thirty years.

He simultaneously began an unprecedented career as a consultant that now takes him all over the world. He came up with a unique concept for a restaurant and cookery school in Majorca, which in only two years became one of the top establishments on the island; he also opened a restaurant in Tokyo for the Japanese Juchheim group. Based on an idea by Dietrich Mateschitz, head of the Austrian beverage producer 'Red Bull', he developed the – to this day unique – concept of the restaurant IKARUS at Hangar-7, Salzburg airport. Until 2013 under the helm of Witzigmann pupil Roland Trettl, and since then under the auspices of Martin Klein, the best and most creative chefs in the world cook there in monthly rotation; the Hangar 7 is meanwhile recognised as having one of the most innovative restaurant concepts in the world.

In 2002, Eckart Witzigmann initiated a new project that has attracted up to 150.000 thrilled visitors per year. Seating 450 and housed in old 'mirror tents' from the turn of the century, guests can thrill to a four-hour show featuring the best artists in the world, while enjoying a sumptuous four-course dinner. The 'Eckart Witzigmann Palazzo' and the subsequent project, the 'Witzigmann-Roncalli-Bajazzo', have already visited Munich, Hamburg, Cologne, Frankfurt and Düsseldorf, and are imitated frequently. For the new PALAZZO location in Graz, from the playing season in 2016-18, the Austrian could be won once more for a dinner show.

It is the man's unprecedented duality that is responsible for Eckart Witzigmann's extraordinary success. The 150,000 visitors at the Eckart Witzigmann Palazzo feel just as at home with him as the kings and heads of state for whom he has cooked. Hardly surprising then that the New York Times referred to him as the 'chef of kings and gods', while the list of dignitaries and celebrities he has graced with his art is endless.

These include such satisfied guests as Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip, King Hassan of Morocco, King Harald of Norway, the Belgian royal family, the Maharaja of Jaipur and King Carl-Gustaf and Queen Sylvia of Sweden. The Swedish king was so impressed with Witzigmann's culinary skills that he took it upon himself to enter the kitchen to personally thank the 'chef of kings' himself.

And the uncrowned guest list is just as endless, from President Gorbachev of Russia and US President George W. Bush to former French head of state Valerie Giscard d'Estaing. German chancellors and presidents have trusted in the expertise and assuredness of Eckart Witzigmann for state visits, as have football emperor Franz Beckenbauer and Formula 1 legend Nicki Lauda. What unites them is the simple realisation that nowhere is it possible to dine better than here. As for Eckart Witzigmann himself, he makes no distinctions between his guests; "for me, every guest is equally important and I always make an effort to treat every one of them the same."

The name of Eckart Witzigmann is a quality parameter outside the culinary world, also: for example, 'The International Eckart Witzigmann Award', The 'ECKART' was awarded from 2004 to 2021. THE BMW Group was partner from 2012 to 2021 of the 'ECKART'. The award, which was presented by the 'ECKART Academy', honoured outstanding individuals in the fields of 'Art of cookery', 'innovation', 'creative responsibility' and 'art of living'. For the first time, 2017, the ECKART was endowed with € 50,000 of prize money for each category, to reflect the prestige and importance of the award among top international culinary prizes. The coveted prize has previously been awarded to HRH Prince Charles of Wales, Günther Grass, Tommy Ungerer, Ferran Adrià, Alain Ducasse, Joël Robuchon, Marc Haerberlin and Dieter Kosslick, among others.

One award that Eckart Witzigmann is particularly proud of is from Sweden: in 2007, the University of Örebro bestowed on him the title of Professor and Honorary Doctor, not only in appreciation of his past services but also to preserve his knowledge and pass it on to future generations.