

Compass crowns Chef of the Year

Compass Group's search for its 2010 Chef of the Year culminated in a closely fought final at this year's Restaurant Show, with Robert Dant of Christ Hospital School Horsham claiming the title.

The competition sponsored by SAMAC, the Southern African Macadamia Growers' Association, saw hundreds of entries from across the group's diverse catering arms whittled down in regional heats to ten finalists. The judging panel which included Jason Atherton, were impressed by the high standard of this year's chefs and in what was a very close contest, winner Robert Dant stood out for his innovative and seasonal menu.

Of particular note was his creative use of stipulated ingredient macadamia nuts in a starter of Bream Pan Fried in Macadamia Oil with Smoked Haddock and Potato Brandade, Braised Fennel, Sweet Peppers, Curried Cauliflower, Toasted Macadamia Nuts and Macadamia Nut Milk. Runners up in second and third place were Lesek Karpinsk of Chartwells and Paul Dickinson of Restaurant Associates.

Dant's reward is a week long culinary trip to South Africa courtesy of SAMAC as well as a stage at Jason Atherton's new restaurant Pollen Street Social set to open in February. He'll be joined by the Junior Compass Chef of the Year, Jack Crow, from Coutts bank who also shone at the competition creating a bramley apple crumble with a caramelized macadamia topping.



Robert Dant, Compass Chef of the Year 2010

Nick Vadis Executive Chef of Compass UK and Ireland comments:

'This year's competition has been incredibly close with each chef producing food to be proud of. The support of the Southern African Macadamia Growers' Association has been fundamental and underpinned the whole competition with the use of a quality and versatile ingredient which has really encouraged the chefs' creativity.

What's also been great is the mix of awards we've seen ie. The Junior Winner came from Restaurant Associates our fine dining arm and Robert the Senior Winner from Chartwells our education catering wing, something that really demonstrates the breadth of talent we have here at Compass.'