

WORLD GOURMET SUMMIT

# Flavour of the year — again

**Two culinary talents here win summit's excellence awards for second year running in a field of 51 contestants**

By **TEE HUN CHING**

GOOD things do come in pairs, as several culinary talents found out at the World Gourmet Summit's Awards Of Excellence presentation ceremony.

Mr Sam Leong, 36, director of kitchens for Jade at The Fullerton, and Mr Aby Tan, 28, chef sommelier at Les Amis, were named Asian Ethnic Chef Of The Year and Screwpull Sommelier Of The Year respectively for the second year running.

Mr Emmanuel Stroobant, 34, also found himself clutching two trophies on Sunday when his cosy French restaurant at Central Mall, Saint Pierre, was named Christoffle New Restaurant Of The Year. He was also honoured as Chef Of The Year.

Said the unassuming Mr Leong: "Last year, winning the award was like striking the lottery. This year, I'm not as excited, but just as proud. There is also greater pressure now that more people will be looking at me to see how I perform."

The Awards Of Excellence is the food and beverage industry's equivalent of the Oscars. It was launched last year at the summit to honour top talents in the field.

The week-long World Gourmet Summit made its debut in 1997 and is organised

by Peter Knipp Holdings and the Singapore Tourism Board. It aims to position Singapore as a gourmet paradise.

Said STB chairman Wee Ee-chao: "The awards also serve to motivate more people in the industry to aim for the best. This is important for a country like Singapore, that we offer quality and value as our competitive advantages."

Held at The Fullerton, Sunday's event saw 51 F&B professionals vying for 16 awards, of which three are new.

They are Executive Chef Of The Year, Asian Ethnic Restaurant Of The Year and the Martell Cognac Food & Beverage Manager Of The Year.

The nomination process began last November when 250 prominent F&B professionals, journalists, critics, food and wine merchants, and members of food and wine associations, whose identities are kept secret, were asked to name their favourites for the culinary and restaurant awards.

After two rounds of evaluation, the top three nominees of each category were named finalists.

They were then assessed again by a select panel of jurors, who picked a winner and submitted the results to an independent auditor for verification.

Les Amis' Mr Tan, a for-



Photos: JAMES CROUCHER

**SWEET TASTE OF VICTORY (top):** Winners and their well-wishers savour the moment of glory.

**WHAT'S COOKING (above):** Asian Ethnic Chef Of The Year Sam Leong (left) and Chef Of The Year Emmanuel Stroobant licked their rivals.

mer waiter at Raffles Hotel who became a sommelier in 1996, said: "Knowing that this award came from a voting system and from people whom I might have come across before makes it all the more meaningful."

Even those who returned empty handed were thrilled. Said Mr Andrew Tiins, 43

president and chief executive officer of Tung Lok Group, who was in the running for the Lifetime Achievement Award: "Being nominated is already an achievement in itself."

Mr M.P.S. Puri, 46, senior vice-president of operations at Raffles International, walked away with this honour



Restaurants under the Tung Lok Group garnered two awards — Asian Ethnic Restaurant Of The Year (Club Chinois) and Mr Leong's Asian Ethnic Chef Of The Year title.

Said Mr Leong: "Being a chef is no longer just about cooking nowadays. You have to interact with the guests and follow up on their feedback. It's easy to just say, 'Hello! I'm Sam' to those who compliment you.

"But to those who complain, you have to manage their feedback properly such that they become your repeat customers. That's the real challenge."

For Mr Stroobant, a Belgian, his Malaysian Chinese wife Edina, 29, who runs Saint Pierre with him, is his worst critic. "Nine times out of 10, I'll throw whatever new dish or sauce that he comes up with back at him," she said with a laugh.

He replied with a shrug: "I just work harder at it."

◆ For enquiries about the World Gourmet Summit, call the hotline on 6270-1254 during office hours or visit [www.worldgourmetsummit.com](http://www.worldgourmetsummit.com)

## And the winners are...

- Chef Of The Year:** Emmanuel Stroobant (Saint Pierre)  
**Executive Chef Of The Year:** Christophe Megel (The Ritz-Carlton, Millenia Singapore)  
**San Pellegrino Rising Chef Of The Year:** Nam Quoc Nguyen (The Lighthouse)  
**Asian Ethnic Chef Of The Year:** Sam Leong (Jade)  
**Inniskillin Icewine Pastry Chef Of The Year:** Kenny Kong (Raffles The Plaza & Swissotel The Stamford)  
**Restaurant Of The Year:** mezza9 (Grand Hyatt Singapore)  
**Asian Ethnic Restaurant Of The Year:** Club Chinois  
**Christoffe New Restaurant Of The Year:** Saint Pierre (Central Mall)  
**Martell Cognac Food & Beverage Manager Of The Year:** Sjeke Jansen (Raffles Hotel)  
**WMF Restaurant Manager Of The Year:** Christopher Conway (mezza9, Grand Hyatt Singapore)  
**Screwpull Sommelier Of The Year:** Aby Tan (Les Amis)  
**Wine List Of The Year:** Les Amis  
**Lifetime Achievement Award:** M.P.S. Puri (senior vice-president of operations, Raffles International)  
**Asian Cuisine Article Of The Year:** The Road Home (by Noelle Tan, Loh Hsian Ming, Amy Van, Sharon Soh of Wine & Dine Singapore, August 2001)  
**Wine Article Of The Year:** French Or New World (by Lim Hwee Peng, Wine & Dine, November 2001)  
**Electrolux Culinary Institution Of The Year:** Singapore Hotel And Tourism Education Centre (Shatee)