

Media Information
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ECKART 2014 for the “Art of Cookery” goes to Heinz and Heinz Reitbauer: Change and roots.

Munich. Heinz Reitbauer, born in 1941, is a radical in the positive sense. When he took over a small corner eatery in 1970, transforming it first into a comfortable tavern and then a world-class restaurant, he was radical in his demands, exploiting his passion and resources to the full. Reitbauer and his wife, Margarethe, used earnings from the restaurant’s early years for educational culinary trips to France – and regularly sent staff there to learn from their model. These efforts paid dividends – in 1992, the establishment was named best restaurant in Austria.

However, Heinz Reitbauer never forgot his Styrian roots and opened a second restaurant, the “Steirereck am Pogusch” in 1996 on the remote Pogusch Pass in the Alps of Upper Styria. The restaurant soon became a bastion of unadulterated dining pleasure that still influences gastronomy in Styria and beyond to this day. It is currently considered the best mountain guest house in the world – radically regional, but with a definite wider perspective. The best the surrounding area has to offer is served on huge tables: a full range of veal dishes prepared from mountain calves butchered on site, game and freshwater fish – prepared simply, naturally and authentically and served with unpretentious, warm and attentive hospitality.

In 2005, the “Steirereck” restaurant moved into the former dairy in Vienna’s central park and Heinz Reitbauer Jr., previously chef at the Pogusch restaurant, took over as head chef. Heinz Reitbauer Sr. and Margarethe continue to manage the restaurant in Styria.

Heinz Reitbauer, was born in 1970 in Vienna, but is at home the world over. He initially trained in his parents’ restaurant and later studied with Alain Chapel (Mionnay), one of the pioneers of “Nouvelle Cuisine”, Anton Mosimann (London)

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and Joël Robuchon (Paris). He has been chef de cuisine of the "Steirereck" restaurant since spring 2005. His is a two-pronged gastronomic concept: On the ground floor, the "Meierei im Stadtpark" offers uncomplicated bistro cuisine made from high-quality ingredients. Many items focus on dairy products – not just in recognition of the building's former function, but also as a tribute to the strong tradition of dairy farming throughout the Alpine region and beyond.

The first floor is where Heinz Reitbauer practises his culinary art, built on appreciation and respectful handling of products. He combines the finest ingredients and the highest culinary art to create one of the most modern cuisines in the world. Reitbauer is one of the most committed members of a new generation of top chefs who embrace social responsibility through their work. When he took over at "Steirereck", there were five types of saltwater fish on the menu, and just one freshwater fish – today, it is the other way round.

Authentic products and diversity are essential to Reitbauer's work. He believes that diversity is seriously threatened by the global trend towards uniformity and is therefore committed to biodiversity. For Reitbauer, rules such as the European Union's seed regulation mean an alarming reduction in diversity: "We are being robbed" is his succinct analysis of the situation. He remains humble about the role of his work in the overall context, when he says: "Haute cuisine is not the benchmark for a country's gastronomic quality, but the products and restaurants that process them".

ECKART

The International Eckart Witzigmann Award is one of the most prestigious honours recognising outstanding achievements in the art of cooking and fine dining. "Chef of the century" Eckart Witzigmann has awarded the ECKART for unique culinary achievements and special commitment under the broad spectrum of lifestyle since 2004. In partnership with the BMW Group, the Witzigmann Academy presents awards annually in three categories: "Art of Cookery", "Innovation" and "Art of Living". The Academy presented its first ECKART for "Creative Responsibility and Enjoyment" in 2013, with a cash award of 10,000 euros endowed by the BMW Group.

Previous ECKART winners include HRH Charles, Prince of Wales (Highgrove); Daniel Boulud (New York City); Elena Arzak (San Sebastian); Anne-Sophie Pic (Valence); Harald Wohlfahrt (Tonbach); Dieter Kosslick (Berlin); Ferran Adrià (Barcelona); Marc Haerberlin (Illhaeusern); Joël Robuchon (Paris); and many

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more.

If you have any questions, please contact:

BMW Group Corporate Communications

Email: presse@bmw.de
Media website: www.press.bmw.de

Daria Gotto-Nikitina, BMW Group Business and Financial Communications
Spokesperson Marketing and BMW Welt
Phone: +49-89-382-60340
mailto: Daria.Gotto-Nikitina@bmw.de

Internationale Eckart Witzigmann Preis GmbH

Otto Geisel
Lachner-Straße 18
80639 München
Telephone: +49 (0) 89 139 260 26
office@ottogeisel.de
www.eckart-witzigmann-preis.de

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