

Press release
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BMW GROUP
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ECKART 2013: A sustainable feast for the senses

240 guests assemble at BMW Welt to salute the winners of the Eckart Witzigmann Prize: the Chef of the Century pays tribute to his colleagues Robuchon, Atala and Fehling; the award for Culture of Living goes to Martina Gedeck

Munich. For one night only, BMW Welt and the BMW Museum in Munich attracted the gaze of the culinary world. Last Tuesday evening, VIP guests drawn from the spheres of business, culture and gastronomy gathered at the BMW Museum for the presentation of the ECKART 2013 awards to star chefs Joël Robuchon (France), Alex Atala (Brazil), Kevin Fehling (Travemünde, Germany) and actor Martina Gedeck. The evening continued with a seven-course gala dinner for the 240 guests at BMW Welt. Since its introduction in 2004, the International Eckart Witzigmann Prize (ECKART for short) has become one of the most prestigious honours recognising outstanding achievement in the art of cooking and fine dining.

In this the second year of the partnership between the BMW Group and the Witzigmann Academy, a new award for Creative Responsibility and Enjoyment went to the Brazilian Alex Atala, in recognition of his commitment to the rediscovery and creative preparation of products from the Amazon region. As Dr Friedrich Eichiner, Member of the Board of Management of BMW AG, put it: "The award of the prize to Alex Atala acknowledges his social commitment to sustainable enterprise. He is helping to improve living conditions for many people." The issue of sustainability is what links ECKART and the BMW Group. Sustainability has been anchored as part of the BMW Group's corporate strategy for many years.

Atala intends to use his prize money, funded by the BMW Group, to support basic research into the relationship between man and food. "We all worry about protecting nature, the forests, rivers and seas," Atala explained, "but we also have to think about the people who live there. My aim is to promote regional diversity – biologically, agriculturally and socially – with the aim of providing everybody with good food that is also good for the environment. Cookery is a useful tool for reconciling these two ideals."

The prize in the Art of Cookery category was awarded to Frenchman Joël Robuchon, who for several decades has been one of the most renowned and influential representatives of international gastronomy. In common with Witzigmann, 68-year-old Robuchon has held the Gault-Millau title Chef of the Century since 1994 and is also one of the world's leading exponents of fine dining, with a string of restaurants from New York to Tokyo. The former French Culture Minister Jack Lang presented him with his award, saying: "What makes Robuchon unique is the way he combines a fertile imagination with faithfulness to the product and tradition."

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The ECKART 2013 for Innovation went to Kevin Fehling. The 36-year-old from northern Germany is one of the youngest chefs ever to receive three Michelin stars. In his restaurant at the Columbia Hotel in Travemünde, he treats his guests to outstandingly creative and often surprising compositions using regional and international ingredients. "It's a huge honour for me just to be here," Fehling said. "I feel a bit like Philipp Lahm must have felt when he played his first match for Germany."

Completing this year's quartet of award winners is Munich-born actor Martina Gedeck, who receives the ECKART 2013 for Culture of Living. A highly versatile performer, Gedeck has starred in many successful films, including *Mostly Martha*, for which she turned in a brilliant performance as a head chef in search of a winning recipe for happiness. Drawing parallels between the arts of cooking and acting, Gedeck said: "True mastery is achieved by allowing clarity, purity and simplicity to shine through."

ECKART

The International Eckart Witzigmann Award is one of the most important distinctions recognising leading contributions to the art of cookery and food culture. "Chef of the Century" Eckart Witzigmann uses the ECKART awards – launched in 2004 – to reward outstanding achievements in cookery and exceptional commitment to the multi-faceted area of cultural living. In partnership with the BMW Group, the Witzigmann Academy presents the awards annually in the "Art of Cookery", "Innovation" and "Cultural Living" categories. The prizes will be joined in 2013 by an ECKART for Creative Responsibility and Enjoyment, which comes with €10,000 worth of financial backing from the BMW Group.

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

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