



# LE TAITTINGER

PRIX CULINAIRE INTERNATIONAL

*FOR THE SECOND TIME IN ITS HISTORY, A JAPANESE CHEF HAS WON THE TAITTINGER INTERNATIONAL CULINARY PRICE. KENICHIRO SEKIYA, ONE OF JOËL ROBUCHON'S MENTEES, SCOOPED THE TROPHY IN THE INTERNATIONAL CULINARY COMPETITION'S 52<sup>ND</sup> FINAL.*

*Monday 19 November 2018*

This year's edition was a moving one, exceptionally presided over by JEAN-PAUL BOSTOEN, 'Meilleur Ouvrier de France', Taittinger Prix Culinaire winner in 2004, chef of L'Auberge de l'III (of the Haerbelin family), holder of three Michelin stars for 50 years.

At 6.30 a.m. on Monday 19 November 2018, the six candidates began cooking. Once again, the competition took place inside the Ecole Ferrandi.

This year's main course theme was a turban of sole served with an artichoke-based side and with a side of the chef's choice. The sole was selected for the test the day before in a strictly controlled draw supervised by an independent adjudicator. The candidates, who had merely a few hours to finalize their recipes, were also required to complete a compulsory exercise going by the title of 'an egg-based starter'. This theme concocted by Emmanuel Renault and the organizing committee's chefs was a good reflection of the demanding level of the competition, both for the technical skills required to create the turban and the risk-taking involved in preparing something as seemingly simple as eggs.

For the sixth year, the Prix Culinaire was headed by Emmanuel Renault who has presided over the jury since 2013. The chef of the three-star Michelin restaurant 'Flocons de Sel' generously devotes his energy and expertise to the competition, while also ensuring fairness for the candidates, whose backgrounds vary from well-renowned to more modest establishments. He is assisted in this task by the organizing committee and the jury whose members, by their exceptional experience and professionalism, are an example for the candidates and necessarily heighten the expectations on them.

Emmanuel Renault was exceptionally unable to preside over the final as he was in China, so he brought in Jean-Paul Bostoen to head the judging.

The Kitchen jury consisted of four chefs:

**Bernard Leprince**, 'Meilleur Ouvrier de France', Taittinger Prix Culinaire winner in 1995.

**Benjamin Patisier**, of Vienna's 'La Pyramide', 'Meilleur Ouvrier de France', two stars.

**Amandine Chaignot**, a private chef.

**Lars Van Galen** of 'Larnsnik', one star, from the Netherlands.

The Tasting jury was comprised of the following members:

**Hiroshi Horita**, Taittinger Prix Culinaire winner in 1984, chef at 'Mange Tout' in Tokyo, one star.

**Stéphane Décotterd**, of 'Pont de Brent', Switzerland, two stars.

**Michel Roux**, of 'Le Gavroche', London, two stars.

**Pierre Orsi**, 'Meilleur Ouvrier de France', chef of 'Pierre Orsi' in Lyon.

**Jonathan Zandbergen**, Taittinger Prix Culinaire winner in 2014, chef of the 'Merlet' restaurant in Schoorl, in the Netherlands, one star.

**Eric Briffard**, 'Meilleur Ouvrier de France', executive chef and director of culinary arts at the Le Cordon Bleu school.

**Bruno Verjus**, of 'Table', Paris, one star.

**Christophe Schmitt**, Taittinger Prix Culinaire winner in 2012, chef of 'L'Almandin', L'Île de la Lagune, one star.

**Michel Comby**, Taittinger Prix Culinaire winner in 1967.

This year, the final was also delighted to welcome the journalist Périco Légasse into the jury as a gastronome. Légasse then presented the ceremony surrounded by the whole Taittinger family.

At the end of this day of work and passionate culinary discussions, the prize-giving ceremony and dinner were held at The Lutetia.

During the evening, the magnificent hotel once again offered a demonstration of French luxury at its finest, inspired in its essence by human experience and culture. It was an immense joy for the Taittinger family to return to this highly esteemed venue where a previous edition of its celebration of French gastronomic excellence was hosted only just a few years ago.

Following a speech by Pierre-Emmanuel Taittinger, Périco Légasse revealed the top three chefs one by one, announcing a Japanese candidate as the winner; for the second time in the history of the award. Kenichiro Sekiya, Head Chef of Atelier Robuchon in Tokyo, was for a long time the mentee of the restaurant's legendary chef. While delighted with his award, the young man was also moved by this opportunity to celebrate the memory of his mentor, who himself won the prize in 1970. There could be no finer homage to Joël Robuchon.

The second chef on the podium was the Swiss candidate Antony Maillet, second de cuisine at two-Michelin-star 'Le Floris' in Geneva. In third place came British chef Tom Scade, a sous-chef at The Ritz, London.

The three other finalists Vivien Rouleaud, Simon Denis and Sander van Zantvleit were also applauded for their wonderful performance during the day.

The ceremony also named Julien Loquet as the 2018 winner of the Cooking Talent prize. This statistics expert could surely never have imagined finding himself among some of the greatest starred chefs and receiving such recognition for his brilliant home cooking. As highlighted by Gérard Marquoin, who presided over the final of this competition reserved exclusively for amateur chefs, the first quality of a good home chef is the desire to bring pleasure to those at his table. The focus of the competition is on keeping things simple and working with flavours! These values were strongly approved by the two partner organizations, Miele, represented by Caroline Cornut, and Taittinger.

It was then time for the guests to discover chef Benjamin Brial's delicious menu, which was created to be paired with the wines being served. Taittinger presented a lively spirited Brut

Vintage 2013. This was followed by the champagne house's sumptuous cuvées Comtes de Champagne Grands Crus Blanc de Blancs 2007 and Comtes de Champagne Rosé 2006. The evening concluded with the serving of its Nocturne champagne, as if in promise of a joyful after-party.

à l'énergie communicative. Lui succédèrent les somptueuses Cuvées Comtes de Champagne Grands Crus Blanc de Blancs 2007 et Comtes de Champagne Rosé 2006. Cette soirée s'acheva sur la cuvée Nocturne, telle la promesse d'un épilogue joyeux.

*Additional background – 'Le Taittinger' Prix Culinaire*

*Behind the prize is a story of champagne and cuisine, of family and gastronomy. The idea was born in 1966, on an evening during the harvest, when the champagne house's then CEO Claude Taittinger was entertaining Georges Prade, Commander of the Order of the Côteaux de Champagne, at Château de la Marquetterie. The two epicureans discussed their memories and their attachment to cooking based on the most natural flavours and their fears about the path that gastronomy was taking.*

*They decided that they would create an international gastronomical contest, held and judged by professionals. Their desire was to acknowledge the merits of a cuisine that abided by classical rules while still being creative. From what was a whimsical chat emerged a prestigious competition. Very quickly, the young chefs named as winners became the stars of the profession. Recognized by their peers, they gained access to the very restricted circle of top chefs thanks to the thorough and demanding nature of this competition. The transmission and sharing of such a precious savoir-faire are today more than ever among the core concerns of the Taittinger family.*

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## PHOTOS



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