

PORTRAIT

ECKART WITZIGMANN - "Chef of the Century"

When the French restaurant guide Gault Millau proclaimed Eckart Witzigmann "Chef of the Century" in 1994 he joined the ranks of the greatest living chefs, an award only bestowed on three others before him: Paul Bocuse, Joel Robouchon and Frédy Girardet. Conferring this ultimate accolade of the culinary world (which has not been awarded again since 1994) to a non-Frenchman is a clear sign of the esteem and unique status Eckart Witzigmann has achieved.

The Austrian Eckart Witzigmann, born in Bad Gastein in 1941, perfected his craft in the world's best restaurants, his outstanding talent being fostered by the elite among his profession: Paul Bocuse, Paul Simon, Roger Vergè, the brothers Troisgros and especially Paul Haeberlin recognised Witzigmann's unique talent and lent him support along his extraordinary career path.

Besides his time in France, Eckart Witzigmann has collected international experience in some of the world's most prestigious restaurants. Among these: Operakällaren in Stockholm, Cafe Royal in London, Villa Lorraine in Brussels and the Jockey Club in Washington D.C.

Eckart Witzigmann spent a total of 13 years in other countries, before bringing his culinary skills and creativity to Germany in 1974, which marked the beginning of his revolutionising of the German cuisine. Even today, in Germany one draws a distinction between the era before and after Witzigmann opened his own restaurant Aubergine in Munich in 1978, a place of gourmet legends and the nucleus of fine dining in Germany. Artists, aristocrats and gourmets from all corners of the world flocked to Munich to experience and relish the creative culinary art of Eckart Witzigmann. In 1978 the Aubergine became the first restaurant outside France to be awarded three Michelin stars. ☆☆☆ Eckart Witzigmann received this prestigious reward every year until the restaurant closed in 1993. Witzigmann decided to step down at the height of his success. As he said at the time: "I reckon I can't do any better than this".

"The father of all chefs", as he is respectfully called by his protégées, became one of the most successful authors of cookery book in the last two decades and began an outstanding career as a culinary expert around the globe.

He then developed the idea of a restaurant and training school on Mallorca in Spain, which became one of the best culinary venues on the island in just two years. He had a restaurant built in Tokyo for the Japanese Juchheim Group; together with the company founder he devised a unique concept for the Austrian drinks manufacturer Red Bull: one of the best restaurants in Austria, the restaurant IKARUS - Hangar 7 at Salzburg Airport, was created in the roof dome of the hangar.

In 2002 Eckart Witzigmann started an ambitious new restaurant project which in the meantime received 150,000 enthusiastic visitors per year. Up to 450 guests are accommodated in antique mirror tents from the turn of the century where they are entertained by a four-hour show hosting some of the world's best artists – the whole event is accompanied by a lavish four-course menu. The "Eckart Witzigmann Palazzo" has entertained visitors in Munich, Hamburg, Cologne Frankfurt and Düsseldorf and was sold out almost every day.

It is the unparalleled versatility that forms the basis of Eckart Witzigmann's enormous success. The 150,000 visitors to the Eckart Witzigmann Palazzos feel equally at ease as the kings and heads of state for whom he has cooked. The New York Times accurately called him the "Chef of Kings and Gods" – the list of dignitaries and personalities that he has cooked for is endless.

His satisfied guests include: Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Phillip, King Hassan of Morocco, King Harald of Norway, the Belgian Royal Family, the Maharajas of Jaipur as well as King Carl-Gustaf and Queen Sylvia of Sweden. The Swedish King was so impressed by Witzigmann's culinary offerings that took it upon himself to enter the kitchen and to thank the „Chef of Kings" personally. But even the list of uncrowned heads of state is endless, ranging from presidents Gorbachev of Russia and George W. Bush of the USA to the former French head of state Valerie Giscard d'Estaing. During state visits German federal chancellors and presidents have put their faith in the expertise and unrivalled cuisine of Eckart Witzigmann. The same rings true for celebrities such as football legend Franz Beckenbauer or the formula 1 ace Nicki Lauda.

....and yet everybody agrees – where eating is concerned – there no equal!

For more information: www.eckart-witzigmann.com
