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Hermitage Hotel team cooks to victory once again at Salon Culinaire competition

The Hermitage Hotel at Aoraki Mt Cook is once again celebrating culinary success with its award-winning chefs taking out first and third place at the Southern Light Salon Culinaire competition on Saturday (11 May 2013).

Held at Otago Polytechnic in Cromwell, Hermitage Hotel executive chef Kane Bambrey and chef de partie Chris Walker beat off stiff competition to take top spots in the prestigious 'Chef of the Region' category.

Chef Bambrey, who competed last year and won three individual events, this year led the team to victory, winning silver medals in class 12 beef, class 4 'hot main presented cold' and class 11 'mystery box' notching up a total score of 248 points.

His award-winning dishes were pistachio-crusted lamb rack, with lamb cheek and bean terrine, beef sirloin with butternut puree, and broad bean and potato ragout, and pan-seared sole with scallop and prawn roularde, saffron potato and glazed yams.

Chef Walker's dishes also wowed the judges, receiving bronze medals in Class 12 Beef, Class 4 'hot main presented cold' and Class 11 'seafood mystery box' giving him a total of 228 points and third place.

Chef Walker's dishes included pork belly and black pudding with asparagus gel and balsamic poached baby pear with chorizo jus, beef sirloin with garlic purée, potato gnocchi, and smoked tomato aioli, and sole fillets with capsicum farce wrapped in carrot ribbons with a medley of roast vegetables and seafood, and lemon beurre blanc.

Chef Bambrey said they had worked tirelessly in the weeks leading up to the event to perfect their skills and dishes before the national event.

"All the Hermitage team were involved in the training and it's been a great opportunity to work as a team and showcase our talents," he said.

"I am incredibly proud of how well Chris has done in his first senior chef competition. The hard work really did pay off."

The annual Salon Culinaire competition is for students or chefs already working in the industry and this year attracted around 160 competitors.

Part of a tri-series held across the South Island, entrants compete in categories including preparation and cooking of food, barista skills, table setting and beverage services.

The regional competition, which will be held at Aoraki Mt Cook for the first time next year, is a prelude to the national event to be held in Auckland in August.

Chef Bambrey will lead a team of five Hermitage chefs to compete in the New Zealand chef of the year, junior chef of the year, team of the year and apprentice of the year categories.



L-R The Hermitage Hotel's Chris Walker (2nd) and Kane Bambrey winner of the Chef of the region category at Salon Culinaire



L-R Chris Walker (2nd) and Kane Bambrey (1st) in the Chef of the Region competition at Salon Culinaire

"I think we need more competitions like this that encourage young and up-coming chefs and allow us to share thoughts, ideas and techniques," said Chef Bambrey.

"Getting together to discuss new developments in technology and produce is great as it lifts the standard and abilities of Kiwi chefs, enabling us to compete and shine on the world stage."

No stranger to award success, Chef Bambrey last year won the title of National Champion at the prestigious Monteith's Beer and Wild Food Challenge.

His dish, 'What a Pig', skilfully married the classic flavour of pork with the acidity of Monteith's Apple Cider to impress the judges and take the win over and above multi-award-winning restaurants in some of New Zealand's main centres.

People wanting to sample Chef Bambrey and his team's award-winning food and service can indulge in the Hermitage's 'Winter in the Alps' package incorporating a three-course dinner in the Panorama Room, breakfast and accommodation in a Superior Room for \$350 per couple.

For reservations and more information go to <http://www.hermitage.co.nz/en/dining>

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