



Press Release
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Ascot Park Hotel finalist in national awards

In a culinary contest against some of New Zealand's best, Invercargill's Ascot Park Hotel has proved it's up to the challenge.

The hotel's Emberz restaurant has earned two nominations in the annual Hospitality New Zealand Awards for Excellence – in the coveted Best Restaurant category and Best New/Redeveloped Bar/Restaurant.

Executive manager Bryan Townley said the hotel's staff were "all very pumped" to learn of the recognition.

"It's quite holistic in all it encompasses really so to get this far is a total team effort. It's front of house, it's back of house, it's the ambience, the fit out, the menu – it's everything," he said.

"As Southlanders, we're not good at shouting from the rafters but we need to do that a little bit more. We're a little bit too humble at times but this is well worth celebrating. We're right up there with the big boys."

Other finalists include renowned eateries such as Francesca's Italian Kitchen in Wanaka and Auckland's Botswana Butchery.

Townley said an extensive revamp completed recently ensured the atmosphere at Emberz reflected the calibre of menu designed by head chef Simon Henry.

"Chef is really focused on using local produce and we have a farm-to-fork ethos. It's about obtaining produce within the region and adjusting the menu based on the seasonality," he said.

"He knows exactly where his ingredients are coming from and I think that really pays off on the final plate."

While Southlanders were becoming more adventurous when it came to cuisine, the calibre on offer in the city was often under-estimated.

"The growth in different types of foods has really shown and reflects people are more educated on food. The likes of MasterChef might have a bit to do with that. Meat and three veg is definitely dying out in the trends," Townley said.

"But we are our own worst critics and I think that holds us back at times by not believing what we've got right here in Southland and what we can achieve locally."

The Hospitality New Zealand Awards for Excellence winners will be announced at a black tie function at SKYCITY in Auckland on October 13. Other finalists from the southern region include:

Best Bar: Little Blackwood, Queenstown
Best Country Hotel: Omakau Commercial Hotel, Omakau
Best New/Redeveloped Accommodation: Heartland Hotel Croydon, Gore
Excellence in Customer Service: Radfords on the Lake, Te Anau

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