

Osteria Francescana, Owned by Massimo Bottura, Named World's Best Restaurant

Bryan Solomon (June 14, 2016)



The world's number-one restaurant award finally comes to Italy as Chef Massimo Bottura's Osteria Francescana was named the best restaurant at the World's 50 Best Restaurants Awards Monday night.

Chef Massimo Bottura's Northern Italian Osteria Francescana was awarded the title of the world's best restaurant at the World's 50 Best Restaurants Awards on Monday night. Under the gilded domed ceiling of the Cipriani Ballroom in New York City's Wall Street, Bottura said, "In the end... It's all about hard work."

Bottura's award makes Osteria Francescana, a three-Michelin-star restaurant in Modena, the first Italian restaurant to be ranked number-one on the World's 50 Best Restaurants rankings. Bottura moved up from his number-two spot last year, taking the top spot from the Roca brothers – Joan, Josep, and Jordi – of El Cellar de Can Roca in Spain. When asked how it felt to be the first Italian



restaurant to be number-one, Bottura responded, "In Italy we have three things that are untouchable – football, the Pope, and food. It's something so important."

Osteria Franciscana reinvents foods that are influenced by the flavors of Bottura's childhood and classical culinary, as well as by music, art, film, and literature. Bottura's dishes give seasonal Italian ingredients a modern twist, with each plate telling a story.

One of Osteria Franciscana's most famous plates is the Five Ages of Parmigiano Reggiano, a composition of Parmesan sauce, mousse, foam, crisp, and air aged between 18 and 50 months and served at varying temperatures.

At the press conference after the awards, Bottura confessed that fifteen years ago he nearly gave up his restaurant, only to be persuaded to continue by his wife, Lara.

He was further convinced to continue when a Michelin inspector, stranded by a road accident, came to his restaurant by chance.

The restaurant was recognized and soon awarded its first Michelin star, and the couple never looked back.

Bottura's culinary career began in 1986 when he decided to put his law studies on hold after he learned that a roadside trattoria on the outskirts of Modena was for sale. He quickly bought and renovated the building and opened Trattoria del Campazzo a week later. Bottura then apprenticed himself to Chef Georges Coigny, where he learned a combination of regional Italian cooking and classical French training.

Almost a decade later Bottura opened Osteria Franciscana in the medieval city center of Modena. His idea for the restaurant was to juxtapose culinary tradition and innovation with contemporary art and design. Although operating with a deep understating of culinary tradition, Bottura continued to push culinary boundaries after he spent a summer at El Bulli with Ferran Adrià.

Shortly after Osteria Franciscana was awarded its third Michelin star in 2012, Bottura temporarily closed the popular restaurant to refurbish and update the restaurant with contemporary art and avant garde cuisine.

Bottura is active outside his now number-one restaurant. He is on the board of directors of the Basque Culinary Centre and has written four books, *Aceto Balsamico* (2005), *Parmigiano Reggiano* (2006), *PRO. Attraverso tradizione e innovazione* (2006) and *Never Trust a Skinny Italian Chef* (2014). He also served as Ambassador for Food in the Year of Italian Culture in the United States in 2013 and opened his first restaurant outside of Italy in 2014 in Istanbul, Turkey, called *Ristorante Italia di Massimo Bottura*. At the award show Monday night, Bottura urged his culinary peers to join him in Rio de Janeiro during this summer's Olympics as he opens a soup kitchen in the city's favelas.

The influence of the list has become internationally recognized as the awards are considered by some as the Oscars of the restaurant world. While most people may not eat at one of the top 50 restaurants (especially because some waiting lists can include more than 1000 people), if you eat out you will have eaten food that is influenced by these top chefs.

The awards are great for business, as the awards annually create mass demand for reservations for restaurants named to the list. The impact extends outside of financials, as immediately after the list is published chefs from around the world apply to work at these top institutions.



The awards began in 2002 and is organized by Restaurant, a British magazine. What started as casual office brainstorming in the London offices has grown into a worldwide vote. Divided into 27 regions, nearly 1,000 votes are casted by international chefs, restaurateurs, gourmands, and restaurant critics each year.

Bottura explained that, "There is a community that has been created around 50 Best... We are not in competition with each other." This year's awards were the first to be held outside of London, as Charles Reed, group managing director of William Reed Business Media, owner of the brand, explained that the list is global, not London-centric and they have to show that by hosting the awards around the world. The list clearly reflects how it has become a global list, as the top 50 included 23 different countries from six continents.

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