

Compass chefs dazzle at annual Compass Chef of the Year Competition

4 years ago



The skills of Compass chefs were on show at the company's annual Compass Chef of the Year (CCOTY) competition last week. Held at Christ's Hospital School, Horsham, chefs from across the business competed to be awarded the coveted titles of Compass Senior Chef of the Year and Compass Young Chef of the Year.

Over the last six months, Compass Group UK & Ireland, the UK's largest food and support services business, has run a series of regional heats around the country, which has seen over 40 chefs, from all sectors, showcase their talents in order to reach the final.

Reflecting Compass Group UK & Ireland's ambition to achieve Net Zero by 2030, the event had sustainability at its core. All waste was measured and checked to ensure it was kept to an absolutely minimum, and seasonality of the dishes was key. All competitors had to produce one plant-based course of their choice as well.

The competitors had to impress Judges Matt Owens, Chairman of the Craft Guild of Chefs; Simon Stocker, Chef Consultant and past senior lecturer of Culinary Arts, Westminster College; and Robert Brown, menu and recipe manager Compass Group.

The competition saw the finalists of Senior Chef of the Year prepare three dishes in just over two hours. Previous winner of Apprenticeship Chef of the Year in 2019, Sophie White, from Chartwells Independent, wowed the judges with her three dishes - including a plant-based starter with tempura shiitake mushrooms and a main course of stuffed Pork fillet followed by a sensational sticky toffee pudding with macerated blackberries, to secure the Gold.

A proud member of Compass' Women In Food Community, White is the first female chef to win the coveted price of Compass Chef of the Year, demonstrating the company's ongoing commitment to support the development of female chefs.

Faye De Souza, from Restaurant Associates (a previous Young Chef of the Year winner), secured silver, and bronze went to Bruce Morrison from ESS Energy.

The Young Chef of the Year – (chefs to the level of Chef de Partie), were required to prepare two dishes – a starter and a main course in two hours. Charles Winter, Chartwells Independent, impressed the judges with his main course dish of compressed mushroom which clinched the gold and full marks from all the judges.

Rachel Michie from ESS was awarded silver and the bronze went to Chartwells Independent's Nathan Brown.

Sophie White commenting on her win added: "It's a huge honour to win this award, which was made all the sweeter winning at my home kitchen at Christ's Hospital. I'm incredibly proud of my job, and passionate about serving fantastic food that isn't just great in a school setting, but that stands up on its own against the best from across the business.

"I've been perfecting this dish, with the help of the amazing team from Chartwells Independent, and support from Compass' Women in Food community. I'm delighted with my performance on the day and look forward to entering more competitions moving forwards."

Commenting on the wins Nick Vadis, Compass Group UK & Ireland Culinary Director said: "This is our 25th Compass Chef of the Year and every year I continue to be impressed by the creativity and skills our chefs show. They always rise to the challenge. Competitions are a great way to truly test what you have learnt and what you are capable of. The competition generates so much excitement within our culinary community and I would like to congratulate everyone who took part. They should all be really proud. "

Charlie Brown, Managing Director, Chartwells added: "I am absolutely delighted that two of our chefs have won Compass Chef of the Year. It's great to shine a spotlight on the talent that exists within the education sector, which is sometimes overlooked. Both Sophie and Charles are passionate about serving fantastic food and are great examples of how our industry can support with growth and development. They have developed their skills by learning on the job as well as taking up the opportunities of our apprenticeships, further honing their talents.

"It's a very exciting time for Chartwells Independent, and with phenomenal chefs like Charles and Sophie making lunchtimes exceptional across the country, we've got a very bright future ahead."

Compass Group UK & Ireland will be sending a national team to compete this year in the Culinary World Cup in Luxembourg in November.