

Beat: News

Chef Jose Andres wins the Basque Culinary World Prize 2020

Symbolize the efforts against COVID-19

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USPA NEWS - Chef José Andrés has been announced as the winner of the Basque Culinary World Prize 2020 for his World Central Kitchen (WCK) project. Andrés was chosen for providing a global and collaborative response from gastronomy to the most pressing challenge of our time: the COVID-19 pandemic.

The BCWP jury said José Andrés symbolized the efforts made by chefs around the world to the challenges posed by the crisis and embodied the collaborative action needed during such testing times. The strength, speed and efficiency demonstrated by Andrés in the face of the COVID-19 crisis has also inspired many other professionals to launch various programmes aimed at reviving the catering sector. José Andrés has been cited as an inspiration by many of those who decided to take action in their local communities and has become a global symbol of the efforts made by chefs during the crisis.

In that sense, Andrés's work symbolizes the efforts made by chefs around the world and embodies the actions needed during these trying times such as: facilitating access to food in regions facing shortages; managing solidarity kitchens in challenging contexts; re-establishing supply chains for small producers; providing direct support to restaurant staff as the industry's workforce continues to struggle with the consequences of closed bars and restaurants; and simply for setting an example of cooperation and responsibility.

The strength, speed and efficiency demonstrated by José Andrés in the face of COVID-19 has become a global symbol of the efforts made by chefs during the crisis. For this reason, in addition to José Andrés, the BCWP jury also recognizes the work of 10 chefs, granting special recognition to:

Mariana Aleixo, for her work in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro with Maré de Sabores;
Elijah Amoo Addo, for projects such as Food for All Africa and Chefs on Wheels in Ghana;
Greg Baxtrom, for leading welfare drives in response to the pandemic in New York;
Simon Boyle, for providing relief to disadvantaged groups in London with Brigade;
Tracy Chang, for Off Their Plate and Project Restore Us in Cambridge, Massachusetts;
David Hertz of Gastromotiva for leading food banks and facilitating other initiatives in Brazil and Mexico; Ed Lee, for inspiring community work on behalf of restaurant employees across the United States; Juan Llorca, of Spain, for assisting parents during lockdown by providing healthy, simple recipes for children via YouTube; and Nicole Pisani, of Chefs in Schools in the UK, for providing food to disadvantaged young people while school canteens were closed.

José Andrés "a Spanish-American chef and owner of a chain of restaurants in the United States" established WCK 10 years ago, assembling chefs from around the world and mobilising them to provide a global and cooperative response to a variety of emergency situations. He has already used his influence to support political and humanitarian causes such as helping to create food resiliency in the face of disasters in Haiti and Puerto Rico, and has spent years promoting immigration reforms and job improvements in the catering sector. Throughout, he has been aware that the kitchen can be an engine for social change.

During the challenges created by the pandemic, WCK has played an important role. When the spread of coronavirus began to escalate in March, José Andrés took action, both in cities across the US and in Spain. With the health crisis at its worst in Spain, WCK was running around 150 kitchens in 10 cities with the support of local chefs, food banks and the Red Cross. The organisation showed that during the pandemic it had evolved into a global collaborative initiative between chefs across the world.

As an owner of a large chain of restaurants in the United States, this Asturian chef points out that "only those who work in the restaurant sector can help revive the economy while at the same time rebuild communities." Founded ten years ago, WCK has intervened in many countries and mobilized thousands of volunteers and cooks from around the world. In addition, the chef has spent years promoting immigration reforms and workplace improvements for the restaurant sector, aware that the kitchen can be an engine of social change.

BCWP intends, in its 5th edition, to rise to the challenges that have been marked by the pandemic generated by COVID-19.

Professionals from all corners of the planet have turned to finding creative solutions from gastronomy. For this reason, this year the BCWP has focused on chefs who have offered inspiring, courageous and impactful responses. Professionals in the sector who have helped to cope with a global and collective crisis. Therefore, a winner has been selected that symbolizes the response of the sector and 10 special mentions that provide valuable insight and testimony about the reaction of the sector.

The Basque Culinary World Prize is a unique €100,000 award for chefs around the world whose work has transformed society through gastronomy, and is awarded by the Basque Culinary Centre, a world leading gastronomic institution, and the Basque Government.

Joan Roca, Chair of the Prize Jury, said: "In view of this year's exceptional circumstances, our responsibility had to rise to the current challenges. After an intense process of reflection, we wanted to focus the award on the challenge facing the entire planet due to COVID-19, a challenge that chef Jose Andrés has faced with courage, bravery and a titanic effort. His admirable dedication to work, his ability to deal with humanitarian crises and his present and evident leadership have served as a source of inspiration for many people who have joined its World Central Kitchen initiative around the world. It's a project that has also made visible the work of volunteers who have turned gastronomy into a strong social tool."

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