



Italian chef Massimo Bottura (right) celebrates next to his wife Lara Gilmord after receiving the Best Restaurant award for his restaurant L'Osteria Francescana during the World's 50 Best Restaurants awards in Bilbao. — AFP photos



Italian chef Massimo Bottura talks with the press after receiving the Best Restaurant award for his restaurant L'Osteria Francescana.



Japanese chef Jimbocho Den receives the best 17 restaurant award.

## ITALY'S **OSTERIA FRANCESCANA** CROWNED WORLD'S BEST RESTAURANT AGAIN

Italy's Osteria Francescana was crowned the world's best restaurant for the second time on Tuesday at an awards ceremony put on by British trade magazine Restaurant, beating out top eateries in Spain and France. Run by chef Massimo Bottura, the restaurant in Modena, Italy pipped last year's winner, New York's "Eleven Madison Park," in the World's 50 Best Restaurants awards, after first taking the honor in 2016. It is the only Italian establishment to have won the annual accolade. "This is amazing, this is something we built all together," Bottura told the awards ceremony held in Bilbao in Spain's northern Basque Country, famous for its avant-garde haute cuisine. "I am going to use this spotlight to show that chefs in 2018 are much more than the sum of their recipes."

The top restaurants list's organizers praised "Bottura's contemporary cuisine, which challenges and reinvents Italian culinary tradition while make use of the finest produce from the Emilia-Romagna region." His father wanted him to become a lawyer but when he was 23-years-old Bottura, who was famous for rustling up culinary delights for his friends, dropped his law studies to open a Trattoria in Campazzo, in the countryside around Modena in the Po River Valley. On his days off, he would study with French chef Georges Cogny, who had a restaurant two hours away. "He said to me: 'always follow your palate, because you have a great palate which will make Modena known around the world,'" Bottura said during an interview with AFP in 2016. He opened Osteria Francescana in 1995 after spending time in New York and Monaco.

Bangkok's "Gaggan", whose owner-chef Gaggan Anand has won praise for his modern spin on his native Indian cuisine.

### Half in Europe

Spain continued to dominate the line-up with three restaurants in the top 10, including El Celler de Can Roca, while France had two including Mirazur. The 2018 list of 50 best restaurants included eateries in 22 countries-but over half were in Europe. Six are in the United States, six in Latin America and six in Asia. Tuesday's ceremony also handed out individual chef awards. Britain's Clare Smyth, who catered the dinner at the royal wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle last month, was named best

female chef and France's Cedric Grolet best pastry chef. Peru's celebrity chef Gaston Acurio, who is known for combining classic European techniques with typical ingredients from the Andean country, was given a lifetime achievement award.

The top restaurant award has gone to Spain seven times, the most of any country. In addition to El Celler de Can Roca's two wins, ground-breaking Spanish chef Ferran Adria's El Bulli, which he closed in 2011, took the prize a record five times. This year was the first time the ceremony was held in Spain. The event has been held before in London, New York and Melbourne. — AFP



Peruvian chef Gaston Acurio receives the Lifetime Achievement award.

### Two Peruvians in top 10

Spain's El Celler de Can Roca, which took the top honor in 2013 and 2015, came in second while third place went to Mirazur in southern France. Restaurant magazine, owned by William Reed Media, launched the awards in 2002 and they are now as coveted by restaurants as Michelin stars, although the methodology used to select the best restaurants has faced criticism, especially from several French chefs who say it remains unclear. There are no criteria for putting a restaurant on the list, which is based on an anonymous poll of more than 1,000 chefs, restaurant owners, food critics and other industry insiders from around the world.

Each member gets 10 votes and at least four of those votes have to go to restaurants outside their region. The top 10 included two Peruvian restaurants, "Central" which slipped to number six from fifth place last year, and "Maido" which climbed to number seven from eighth place. The only Asian restaurant in the top 10 was



Spanish chef Juan Mari Arzak (center) and his daughter Elena Arzak receive the best 31st restaurant award.



British chef Clare Smyth receives the 'Best Female Chef' award.



Eneko Atxa (right) receives the award as 43rd best restaurant award.



Argentinian chef Mauro Colagreco (left) celebrates receiving the 2nd best restaurant award for his restaurant Mirazur.

## Celeb chef Samuelsson to open restaurant in Miami's Overtown



File photo shows chef Marcus Samuelsson in New York. — AP

Miami is trying to rebuild a neighborhood that was once a vibrant center for black culture, and a celebrity chef is contributing what he does best: food. Marcus Samuelsson has bought a former pool hall in Miami's Overtown neighborhood and plans to open a restaurant there later this year. A redevelopment board is already pouring tens of millions of dollars into Overtown, but Samuelsson is the first celebrity to make a commitment there. He bought the building for \$1.5 million while turning down opportunities on South Beach.

Samuelsson's cuisine and philosophy is a study in cultural fusion, much like the man himself. He was born in Ethiopia and raised by white adoptive parents in Sweden. He first made a name for himself with upscale Scandinavian fare at Manhattan's chic Aquavit restaurant in the 1990s. A James Beard award winner, his celebrity grew with appearances on Food Network shows. Then in 2010, just as Harlem started gentrifying, Samuelsson opened a restaurant there called Red Rooster. It was an immediate hit. He made an art of turning Southern soul food into hip urban fare, offered gospel brunches and organized food festivals. More recently, he opened Marcus B&P in downtown Newark, an area that is also in the early stages of a comeback.

### Street art

"There's a linkage between Overtown and Harlem and I want to be part of that," Samuelsson said in an interview. His Overtown eatery will hire from the community, offer internships and feature local artists on the walls. "Through art you learn a narrative about people's journey. Music does that, food does that, art does that," he said. Overtown is sandwiched between swanky downtown Miami high-rises and artsy Wynwood with

its shops, bars and world-renowned street art. Despite the prime location, though, Overtown has suffered from a lack of investment and higher-than-average crime rates.

In its prime, Overtown was known as a "Little Broadway" of the South. Black stars like Louis Armstrong, Nat King Cole, Sammy Davis Jr and Billie Holiday performed at Overtown's Lyric Theater. And even when they were performing elsewhere, they stayed in Overtown's black-owned hotels because hotels in Miami's white neighborhoods would not accommodate them.

In the 1960s, two expressways built through the heart of the neighborhood displaced thousands of residents, contributing to Overtown's decline. Then in 1980, three days of riots in Overtown left 18 dead, 400 injured and \$100 million in damage. The protests were sparked by the acquittal of four white police officers in the fatal beating of a black insurance salesman. But the neighborhood is poised for a turnaround. "You are part of a renaissance that's going to mean the most for this neighborhood," redevelopment board Chairman Keon Hardemon told 200 people at an outdoor luncheon across the street from where Samuelsson's restaurant will be located. "We want this place to truly be the Harlem of the South."

The sold-out \$135-a-person preview of Samuelsson's plans attracted politicians and the owner of an MLB franchise. Trays of fried chicken and waffles with smoked maple syrup were served with short ribs, shrimp and grits, dirty rice fritters, collard greens and cornbread with tomato jam. A strolling New Orleans-style jazz band played a festive rendition of the gospel song "I'll Fly Away" as the crowd clapped and swayed.

### Soul food restaurant

Beyond the barricades surrounding the well-heeled celebration, lifelong Overtown resident Dwayne Riggins, 50, parked his

bicycle and watched. His dad owned a soul food restaurant just down the street. He points out the empty lot where a pharmacy used to be. He said he likes the new high-rises being built. "Some people might not approve, but it's time for Overtown to change. It's been down and out all our lives," Riggins said. Rudy Lorenzo, who owns a convenience store, hopes the changes will attract a better-paying clientele, but warns matter-of-factly that the locals "are going to get pushed out ... They aren't going to be able to afford the new apartments."

That's an issue that's played out in many cities around the country - including New York - as residents who lived through years of neglect get priced out when things rebound. Bubba Haynes has lived in Overtown for 55 years. He did construction years ago on buildings near the Lyric Theater. Now he's retired and helps at his son's retail store. "With growth, you take a lot of this crime out of here, but then you're going to lose a lot of the history," he said.

Samuelsson hopes to reflect some of that history along with contemporary local culture when he opens his restaurant. He doesn't have a menu yet, calling that "the fun part." His Harlem menu includes cornbread and his Swedish grandmother's meatballs; his Newark restaurant infuses pasta with Ethiopian flavors in a dish called dorowat rigatoni. "I'm going to come down a lot and I'm going to learn historically what was here, what's relevant right now," he said. "I know it's going to be comfort food." — AP