

PRESS RELEASE

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Coco's shakes rivals with inaugural win

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CULINARY buffs have judged a diverse Cairns CBD dining hotspot as the region's 2016 Restaurant of the Year.

Coco's Restaurant at the Pullman International Hotel was awarded the honour this week by the Australian Culinary Foundation's North Queensland Chapter.

Cairns waterfront restaurants North Bar and Kitchen and Ochre tied for second, while Coral Hedge Brasserie at

RESTAURANT OF THE YEAR

2016: Coco's Restaurant, Cairns

2015: Linga Longa, Cairns

2014: Salt House, Cairns

2013: Ochre, Cairns

2012: Paperbark, Kewarra Beach

Rydges Esplanade finished third. The competition, featuring 11 entrants in total, was judged by social and professional members of the ACF

who dined at the venues between February and December last year. With capacity for 180 guests, Coco's had not previously won the top prize.

Pullman International executive chef Matt Lonne said the award, presented at TAFE Queensland North on Monday, reflected the restaurant's "dedicated team".

"A lot of our apprentices have come a long way over the past couple of years and we are now reaping the benefits of their hard work," he said.

Known for its impressive

seafood range, Coco's Restaurant has about 50 employees.

Mr Lonne, who has worked at the venue for three years, said hard work and creativity were key ingredients to restaurant success.

"You should always be pushing yourself to do something different and new," he said.

"In Cairns it is quite easy to become lacklustre and just cruise with it. But at the same time, if you're prepared to put in the effort, it can also be easy to stand out."

Mr Lonne said the restaurant was preparing for a "mad" few weeks as the Far North's Chinese New Year celebrations began.

ACF North Queensland Chapter president Brian Down said the standard of entrants was "incredible" across the board.

"There are some very good young chefs up here," he said.

"We produce excellent food and, while the tourist is important, the restaurants that look after locals seem to enjoy a lot of success."