



An initiative by:



### **10-Michelin Star Restaurant Treat for Local Culinary Student**

(2 September, 2015) –Singapore’s top local culinary students across 7 institutions gathered last Saturday at Temasek Polytechnic’s Culinary Academy for the LAwards - Culinary Challenge 2015. After 2 rounds of intense drilling, Poh Zhe Kai from Temasek Polytechnic emerged as the champion. A panel of 12 renowned judges was assembled by Les Amis to judge the competition. Top chefs such as Andre Chiang (Restaurant ANDRE), Eric Teo (Singapore Chef’s Association & ET Culinary Arts), Lorenz Hoja (L’Atelier de Joël Robuchon Singapour) and Sebastien Lepinoy (Les Amis Restaurant), to industry experts like Dr. Gog Soon Joo (WDA Singapore) graced the occasion.

Striving to provide local culinary students with opportunities to widen their exposure, homegrown Les Amis Group joined hands with Singapore Tourism Board, Workforce Development Agency and Singapore Chef’s Association, to launch the LAwards - Culinary Challenge that first began in 2014 through the group’s career-grooming initiative, LEAPFROG.

“LEAPFROG is inspired by the idea of progressing by leaps and bounds, overcoming obstacles and constantly jumping ahead. This is exactly the experience that the Les Amis Group offers to promising talents who are ready to step up,” says group Chairman Desmond Lim.

The format of the Culinary Challenge changes yearly. On top of that, the group does not strictly follow conventional culinary competition guidelines. The environment in the competition arena is modelled after how chefs prepare their food in a restaurant.

“The common difficulties that students face include anticipating needs and how to think on their feet to work around the challenges based on limitations like budget. Schools teach the basics, while this competition trains them to adapt to the ever-changing industry while remaining resilient,” says Matthew Nonis, Les Amis Group Training Manager.

This year’s theme was classic French, as compared to last year, where students had free rein to create a dish using a mystery ingredient (i.e. Lobster). 5 contestants who made it to the final round were given a \$200 budget to source for their own ingredients based on a given menu prior to the competition.

“It was a great learning experience as we were challenged to cook classic French dishes, which is something I was not familiar with. I enjoyed the process, and my lecturers reminded me that the entire experience was more important than the outcome,” added Zhe Kai, Champion of the Culinary Challenge 2015.

The group has been the stalwart of the local F&B scene ever since its flagship Les Amis, Singapore’s first independent fine-dining restaurant, opened in 1994. For the past decade, they have been offering scholarships to fuel F&B enthusiasts, thus spawning a succession of alumni who went on to become successful restaurateurs.

“Les Amis has been such a close partner in education and this initiative is yet another way to nurture and challenge the next generation of culinary professionals in the spirit of friendly competition.” Tan Hsien Wei (Mr), Assistant Director, Temasek Culinary Academy & Course Manager, Diploma in Culinary & Catering Management, School of Business, Temasek Polytechnic.

Winners of the annual Culinary Challenge will each be entitled to \$3000 cash and an all-expenses paid '10 Michelin Stars' trip to Europe to wine and dine in the most sought-after restaurants – not forgetting the chance to take selfies with famous chef-owners behind these revered kitchens. The Culinary Challenge will be an invaluable avenue for local students to network with key industry leaders and learn more about the food culture beyond our borders.

"It is always a great motivation for our students' learning journey when industry leaders such as Les Amis Group create and sponsor culinary competitions. We look forward to more LAwards Culinary Challenges." Kwan Lui, Founder and Director, At-Sunrice GlobalChef Academy.

"This is one of countless ways that Les Amis contributes to shaping youngsters to be part of the vibrant culinary scene in Singapore, today and for the future. Always cutting edge and always offering a hand to the new generation, leaving a legacy, Les Amis leads the way." Eve Felder, Managing Director, The Culinary Institute of America.

With Singapore being a prime food hub, the group hopes to lever this competition to an international scale in the future, anchoring its mark as the leading F&B player who has grown from a single local startup, to a family of 20 concepts around the globe.

#### **List of judges for the Culinary Challenge 2015:**

##### Qualifying Round

- Chef Sebastien Lepinoy (Les Amis Restaurant)
- Chef Julien Royer (Odette Restaurant)
- Chef Eric Teo (Singapore Chefs Association & ET Culinary Arts)
- Chef Lorenz Hoja (L'Atelier de Joël Robuchon Singapore)
- Chef Nam Quoc Nguyen (Annam Pte Ltd)

##### Final Round

- Mr. Desmond Lim (Les Amis Group)
- Dr. Gog Soon Joo (WDA Singapore)
- Ms. Ranita Sundramoorthy (Singapore Tourism Board)
- Chef Rick Stephen (Singapore Chefs Association & SATS)
- Chef Andre Chiang (Restaurant ANDRE)
- Chef Joshua Brown (CUT by Wolfgang Puck)
- Chef Willin Low (Wild Rocket)

For more information, head to <https://www.facebook.com/LesAmisGroupLAwards>

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