

Entries open for S.Pellegrino Young Chef 2019/20 competition

S.Pellegrino opened applications for the 2019/20 S.Pellegrino Young Chef competition in February, inviting young chefs to express their personal culinary philosophy in one definitive dish. The competition provides a unique opportunity for talented young chefs to make their name and interact with the global gastronomic community; Nurturing the transformative powers of gastronomy, social responsibility, sustainability, connection, creativity and culinary excellence.



Fabrizio Magoni via [Unsplash](#)

The S.Pellegrino Young Chef title is voted for by a panel of Seven Sages, revered top chefs from around the world.

This year there will be an additional three awards to vie for:

- Fine Dining Lovers Food for Thought award for the young chef best expressing their personal philosophy in their dish;
- S.Pellegrino Award for Social Responsibility for a dish embracing sustainability in food and socially responsible practice; as well as the
- Acqua Panna award for Connection in Gastronomy for a dish that reflects a connection between different cultures.

Global community

S.Pellegrino's contribution to the global food community is greatly appreciated by South African chefs.

Chef David Higgs says has a long history with S.Pellegrino, winning the Eat Out S.Pellegrino award for Chef of the Year 2013. "I've been taken overseas; introduced to some of the world's top ten chefs; I've judged on panels with them, things that as a South African you wouldn't always be exposed to. This network is key, we need to bring its knowledge back to South Africa."

As one of the Seven Sages judging the 2016 Young Chef competition and a mentor in other years, Higgs sees enormous value for the young chefs taking part. "The biggest thing is the calibre of chefs that are at the competition. The exposure is phenomenal. It's not just about disappearing off to work overseas forever. The important thing is to bring knowledge back, not so much the dishes themselves, but techniques and how people think about food."

Chef Angelo Scirocco, a finalist in the AME regional leading up to the S.Pellegrino Young Chef 2015 competition says: "Being part of a global community is like having a family that pushes the limits, understands where you are going and where you want to be. It's a huge amount of networking."

The competition

Chef Vusi Ndlovu, Top 7 finalist of S.Pellegrino Young Chef 2018 feels he learned a huge amount during the two years of the competition: "You learn how to expand on a dish, at how it works, the mechanics, the packaging and the balance. I'd never looked at food in this way – it comprises a holistic approach."

Mentorship

Mentorship is an important aspect of the competition, says Higgs. "A lot of these young chefs haven't cooked at an international level before and are expected to perform in front of audiences and for television. The mentor is there for support and reassurance, to take care of the peripherals so that the young chef can focus. My role as mentor is to give advice on technique, presentation; refining if it needs to be.

Ndlovu agrees: "The mentor is a guiding hand and a sounding board. He or she is in the trenches with you and makes sure that you're in a good space."

Advice

"Cooking is paramount. It can be truly simple and traditional with an edge, but things need to be cooked perfectly. Cook from the heart, something that has a story that you can sell to the judges and that you believe in. Put that forward in a clever and inventive way," says Higgs.

Vusi adds: "Stick to what you know. If you really believe in a concept; whether it's bangers and mash or pickled fish, make it the best dish in the world. Ask a lot of questions."

Scirocco says: "Remember you are not alone and you never have to be. This industry is tough. You have your mentors and your friends who believe in you. That will be your strength."

Applications for the fourth edition of [S.Pellegrino Young Chef Competition](#) 2019/20 will run until 30 April 2019.