

Press release
4 August 2017

ECKART 2017 Award for Innovation goes to María Marte and Luisa Orlando.

From dishwasher to Michelin-starred chef.

Munich. The Eckart 2017 Award for Innovation has been presented to two individuals at the two-Michelin-starred restaurant El Club Allard in Madrid: head chef María Marte and managing director Luisa Orlando. The renowned Eckart Witzigmann and his international jury awarded the accolade in honour of Marte's extraordinary career path from dishwasher to Michelin-starred chef, and of Orlando's bold decision, as a manager, to support her from the very beginning.

María Marte's cuisine stands for an innovative concept that melds contemporary cooking methods with Caribbean elements to create a fascinating Mediterranean-Latin-American fusion. Outstanding flavour combinations and original presentation are her trademark and, in collaboration with her sponsor Luisa Orlando, managing director of El Club Allard, she is realising her dream of young, exciting cuisine coupled with superior dining culture.

Born in the Dominican Republic, María Marte is linked to Spain's Luisa Orlando by a unique story. After immigrating to Spain in 2003, Marte took on a job as a cleaner and dishwasher at El Club Allard, though her ambition from the outset was to become a chef. Defying hurdles and prejudices, she managed to fight her way into a job as kitchen assistant. In 2006, she became the right-hand woman to chef Diego Guerrero, who was awarded the restaurant's first Michelin star in 2007 and its second in 2011. However, in the wake of Guerrero's unexpected departure in 2013, managing director Orlando decided to take a bold and unprecedented step: defying all doubts, she appointed the erstwhile dishwasher María Marte to head chef. Their success is a testimony to the credentials of both women: together, they have successfully defended the two-Michelin star rating of El Club Allard. Moreover, Marte is the only female in Latin America today to hold two Michelin stars.

IN COOPERATION WITH WITZIGMANN ACADEMY AND BMW GROUP.

“This story is like a fairytale. But it’s also much more than that: these two ladies have shown that innovation and quality will always prevail. Today, we would like to honour the courage and unbending will with which María Marte and Luisa Orlando have pursued their goals by presenting them with the ECKART 2017,” said Eckart Witzigmann, after whom the awards are named, as he explained the reasons for the jury’s choice.

Eckart 2017

In 2017, the international Eckart Witzigmann Awards (ECKART) are to be presented in three categories – Art of Cookery, Innovation and Art of Living – plus one further category – Creative Responsibility and Enjoyment – in which it is accompanied by prize moneys provided by the BMW Group.

Following the announcement of Alain Ducasse as the winner of the award for the Art of Cookery, María Marte and Luisa Orlando have now been declared top in the Innovation category. Further winners will be announced during the course of the summer.

This year, the ECKART awards will be presented outside Germany for the very first time, at a gala event in Versailles, near Paris, in September 2017. The international convention of figures from the world of culinary arts will be hosted by ECKART-winner Alain Ducasse and marks the beginning of a world tour that will continue in the US, where the ECKART awards will be presented in 2018.

As partners since 2012, the BMW Group and the Witzigmann Academy are committed to a common goal of providing an international platform for healthy eating, sustainable food culture and responsible use of resources. Award winners to date include Daniel Boulud, HRH Charles Prince of Wales, Elena Arzak, Anne-Sophie Pic, Harald Wohlfahrt, Dieter Kosslick, Ferran Adrià, Marc Haeberlin, Joël Robuchon, Alex Atala, Jon Rose, Mick Hucknall, Massimo Bottura, Dominique Crenn and Andreas Caminada, to name just a few.

At the BMW Group, sustainability has long been an integral part of the corporate strategy, and sustainable business is an established corporate goal. It encompasses a broad spectrum of aspects ranging from the development of fuel-efficient and alternative vehicles and the use of environmentally compatible production processes to eco-friendly recycling techniques.

If you have any questions, please contact:

BMW Group Corporate Communications

Julian Hetzenecker, BMW Group Business and Finance Communications

Tel.: +49-89-382-39229

E-Mail: julian.hetzeacker@bmw.de

E-Mail: presse@bmw.de

Internet: www.press.bmw.de

Witzigmann Academy press contact:

Otto Geisel

Lachner-Straße 18

80639 Munich

Phone: +49 89 139 260 26

office@ottogeisel.de

For more about the Eckart Witzigmann Awards, go to:

www.eckart-witzigmann-preis.de

The BMW Group

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In 2016, the BMW Group sold approximately 2.367 million cars and 145,000 motorcycles worldwide. The profit before tax was approximately € 9.67 billion on revenues amounting to € 94.16 billion. As of 31 December 2016, the BMW Group had a workforce of 124,729 employees.

The success of the BMW Group has always been based on long-term thinking and responsible action. The company has therefore established ecological and social sustainability throughout the value chain, comprehensive product responsibility and a clear commitment to conserving resources as an integral part of its strategy.

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