Press Release Ljubljana, 2.6.2020

**The Slovenia Restaurant Awards: national selection of the best Slovenian restaurants with as many as 34,150 votes in 2020**

<https://the-slovenia.com/restaurant-awards/media/press-release/>

***You still don't know which are the best restaurants in Slovenia this year? Then we offer you the answer created by the international publishing house The Slovenia for the fourth year in a row with the joint votes of the gastronomic academy and media readers. We also have to appreciate our own cuisine before we leave it to foreigners. Let's look through the chronological development of the key national selection of the best restaurants in our country, which only includes key professional associations, the media and also the public.***

**Year 2017 - The birth of The Slovenia Restaurant Awards**

Slovenia has recently been transformed into an important and above all esteemed green destination, full of culinary experiences. Visitors appreciate Slovenia and love to return, not only because of the exceptional diversity and natural beauty, but also because of the rich and selected offer of food and drink. Diverse and innovative dishes, quality ingredients, top quality wines and friendly service are the virtues of Slovenian restaurants.

World selections for the best restaurants have been around for a long time and all culinary developed countries have their own national selection, which was not the case for Slovenia. However, since 2017, we can also boast of our **national and independent selection of The Slovenia Restaurant Awards (TSRA), whose founding father Niko Slavnič** has prepared an innovative approach to judging, where everyone can have their own opinion.

**Vision of the TSRA Selection**

*The international recognition of Slovenia as a gastronomic tourist destination, ensuring a high quality of offer and services, increasing visits to restaurants and the development of a healthy "foodie culture" of Slovenes, is the guiding principle and essence of the project.*

With many years of experience in the field of international tourist literature, we want to contribute an independent and professional selection in Slovenia with a range of restaurants, which is multifaceted and intended for a wider audience, domestic and foreign visitors. We decided on the selection according to the needs of the market, as we are aware that enogastronomic tourism is becoming the fastest growing tourism industry in the world.

**Expert commission and voting criteria - 140 restaurants**

We invited both the professional and amateur public to the selection, and together we obtained all-Slovenian and regional top lists of the best restaurants - the best that Slovenian cuisine has to offer.

An expert commission consisting of Mag. Helena Cvikl, Mira Šemić (wine connoisseur, gourmet and world enogastronomic traveler), dr. Janez Bogataj (Honorary Professor and Doctor of Ethnological Sciences), doc. dr. Aleš Gačnik (Head of the Department of Cultural Tourism and Cultural Heritage at Turistica and Head of the Center for Gastronomy and Wine Culture of the University of Primorska) and Yuri Barron (editor of Slovenian editions of tourist guides In Your Pocket and editor and main author of The Slovenia Book - Top 100 Destinations ) is

had only one guide in evaluating restaurants; it was not the price of the food, the size of the restaurant, or the accessibility of the location, but the overall satisfaction with the visit. In the first year, the commission prepared a set of 140 restaurants

**Members of the expert commission selected a set of restaurants on the following basis**

1. **Criteria:**
* The restaurant must be open for at least one year,
* **Food and drink** (variety, quality of ingredients, presentation of dishes, harmony of tastes, innovation and appropriate combination of food and drink),
* **Service** (greeting, service, way of recommending food and drinks and knowledge of the wait staff).

Based on this, a common assessment of “overall satisfaction” when visiting a restaurant is formed.

1. **The voting process took place in the following order:**

**PROFESSIONAL VOTING (weight of votes - 75%):**

* When to vote: February
* Who votes: Members of the Gastronomic Academy, 3 representatives of each restaurant and foodies, as a rule, one person, one vote
* Who to vote for: for all restaurants listed

**PUBLIC VOTING (weight of votes - 25%):**

* When to vote: March
* Who votes: The general public, as a rule, one person one vote
* Who to vote for: for the higher ranked half of the restaurants from the professional part of the vote (half of the restaurants from each region)

All votes received were reviewed by Deloitte at the end of the public work vote. Deloitte is an independent audit firm that ensures the credibility of the vote and the correct counting of votes each year.

**Winning Ceremony**

The event took place for the first year at Fužine Castle, where we got the winners in as many as five regions. The restaurants Vila Podvin in the north, Ošterija Debeluh in the south, Gostilna Rajh in the east, Hiša Franko in the west, and Restaurant Strelec in Ljubljana and central Slovenia won the coveted title of winner of the region for 2017, while other regional finalists earned the title of the best regional restaurants. The award of the expert commission and the title of the best restaurant in 2017 went to Hiša Franko, with the internationally recognized chef Ana Roš.

**Issue of The Slovenia Restaurant Book**

As the event and the award itself are intended for the professional public, in order to get a good word about Slovenian restaurants as far as possible, we have published a special book THE SLOVENIA RESTAURANTS, which includes both winners and others in the selection. The purpose of the book is to increase the number of domestic guests and to present a varied culinary offer.

**Year 2018**

*"We were very pleased with the excellent response to the project of selecting the best Slovenian restaurants, which was carried out for the first time last year. We were also surprised by the positive response to the book, which is the result of this project. That is why this year we started the project with even more enthusiasm, effort and enthusiasm, which is already recognizable at home and abroad. This year's selection was even more difficult for the commission, as this project also raises the quality and service of the culinary offer and thus the international recognition of Slovenia as a gastronomic tourist destination. "*

**In 2018, the Expert Commission prepared a set of as many as 165 restaurants.**

## Restaurant Strelec - Ljubljana with central Slovenia, Gostilna Krištof - Northern Slovenia, Ošterija Debeluh - Southern Slovenia, Hiša Denk - Vzhodna Slovenija and Hiša Franko - Zahodna Slovenija won the flattering title of the winner of the region for 2018, while other regional finalists earned the title of the best regional restaurants.

## The three absolute winners of the national selection of the best Slovenian restaurants for 2018 in alphabetical order are Hiša Franko, Ošterija Debeluh and Pri Lojzetu.

## The restaurant that received the most votes from the public through online voting, however, is the Galerija Okusov.

**Birth of Food Manifest**

We are all welcome to the table! Let’s all join forces and bring together the best gastronomy: food lovers and restaurant guests, chefs and restaurateurs, journalists and opinion makers, associations, agricultural and food producers, retailers and wholesalers, professors and researchers, politicians and authorities on this project for good and good food for all who live in Slovenia and visit Slovenia.

The manifesto was put together by chefs, nutritionists and food lovers. We challenge Slovenian food culture and all our understanding of Slovenian cuisine. We are convinced that the time has come to create a manifesto for Slovenia, which, due to its incredible tastes, is at the crossroads of several world-famous cuisines, in accordance with the standards of the world's largest cuisines. We celebrate real food and respect and preserve local natural resources, communities and crafts that encourage genuine interaction with each other.

**Year 2019 - An event like never before**

***The year 2019 brought quite a few novelties, including an innovative and unforgettable event, the presentation of new Slovenian gastronomic regions and the acquisition of the flattering title of European Gastronomic Destination for 2021.***

A new expert commission was formed, consisting of prof. dr. Janez Bogataj, doc. dr Aleš Gačnik, mag. Helena Cvikl and Yuri Baron suggested as many as 201 restaurants. We also invited gastronomic associations to vote.

The award ceremony took place at the beautiful location of the golf course and restaurant Evergreen in Smlednik, which was something special and a real tribute to Slovenian cuisine. It ended with a 16-course charity dinner, which has certainly never happened in Slovenia. The day, which can be said to have been the fulfillment of the dreams of every culinary enthusiast, was enriched by educational workshops, a round table with experts in the field of gastronomy and socializing with great food and drink.

**The Slovenia Dinner**

The event ended spectacularly. The “Slovenia Dinner by Römerquelle” dinner was prepared by all the best Slovenian chefs: Mojmir Šiftar (Evergreen Restaurant), Ana Roš (Franko House), Tomaž Kavčič (Gostilna pri Lojzetu - Zemono Manor), Janez Bratovž (JB Restaurant), Uroš Štefelin (Vila Podvin), Uroš Klinec (Nejka and Uroš Klinec), Boštjan Trstenjak (Restaurant Cubo), Marko Magajna & Luka Gmajner (Gallery of Tastes), Igor Jagodic (Restaurant Strelec), Gregor Vračko (House Denk), Leon Pintarič ), David Vračko (Restaurant Mak), Matej Tomažič (Domačija Majerija), Damjan Fink (Gostilna na Gradu), Jure Tomič (Ošterija Debeluh) and Bine Volčič (Monstera Bistro). The funds, 5,000 euros, which we raised at the dinner, were donated to **The Slovenia Young Chef Foundation.**

**Year 2020 - challenges and a look into the future; selection of 249 restaurants**

After the pandemic, we all wanted to go back and dine in the best Slovenian restaurants. Not only in our home country, but also on the world culinary map, Slovenian restaurants are now gaining more and more awards and thus spreading interest in our country from foreigners. Sometimes we have the feeling that foreign guests appreciate us more, but this year we were proved wrong, as during the selection for the best Slovenian restaurants The Slovenia Restaurant Awards 2020 we received a record number of votes, proving that Slovenians have also become attentive to our chefs and appreciate their work more than ever before. In the professional part of the voting for The Slovenia Restaurant Awards we received 6,520 votes from the gastronomic associations, and in the voting of the general public we received 27,630 votes. A total of 34,150 votes for The Slovenia Restaurant Awards 2020!

**Virtual award in response to the current situation with COVID-19**

Due to the COVID-19 epidemic, we have moved the traditional and 4th edition of The Slovenia Restaurant Awards to a virtual platform. We were forced to cancel the entire program, which was supposed to happen on May 5th. Furthermore, the situation with COVID-19 forced us to adapt to the situation and draw the best from the virtual award ceremony. We invited three winners in the National TOP 3 category - Valter Kramar (Hiša Franko), Uroš Štefelin (Vila Podvin) and Tomaž Kavčič (Dvorec Zemono - Gostilna pri Lojzetu) to the conversation via the ZOOM for the ceremony. The topic of conversation was the current situation in the hospitality industry, culinary awards and the importance and development in the future. Restaurants need to adapt quickly to new realities, transform and innovate their businesses to survive.

**Niko Slavnič, The Slovenia**: *Caterers are our pride - they are the gastronomic power of the country.*

**Ana Roš, Hiša Franko:** *We jump into the water, but we don't know the depth. We want to survive the situation, because it is a big financial blow for all of us.*

**Valter Kramar, House Franko:** *Encourage! We will survive only with quality.*

**Uroš Štefelin, Vila Podvin:** *In this situation, everything is quite motivating - it is necessary to adapt, cooperate and look forward bravely. To all of us, the guest is first and foremost surprised and I am grateful that the guests are coming back.*

**Tomaž Kavčič, Gostilna pri Lojzetu - Dvorec Zemono Manor:** *This kind of selection gives us the will to move forward. Believe me, all of us who try and who are our guests in the first place and we look at quality, we will move on. We have been open for three weeks and guests are returning.*

*This year needs to be forgotten as soon as possible, and it needs to get to the end even sooner. We should not think about losses, but we should think about the team and the guest.*

**Winners of The Slovenia Restaurant Awards 2020:**

Top Slovenian restaurants competed in various categories and regions. **Hiša Franko** was named the **best restaurant in the Alpine Slovenia region**, in the area of **​​Mediterranean & Karst Slovenia** it received the flattering title **Gostilna pri Lojzetu - Dvorec Zemono**, in the region of **Thermal Pannonian Slovenia Hiša Denk** was chosen as the best, and in **Ljubljana and central Slovenia impressed Restaurant JB.**

**Gostilna pri Lojzetu - Dvorec Zemono** received the flattering title of the **best inn,** **City Terasa** was chosen as the **best hotel restaurant**, and the **Stari Pisker Inn and Pub** received the **title of the best culinary newcomer** and **VOX POPULI title**. This year, for the first time, the award for the **best tourist farm** was given, the title of which was given to **Domačija Majerija**.

In the end, the three best restaurants in Slovenia were announced in terms of the total number of points. The titles of the best **NATIONAL TOP 3** The Slovenia Restaurant Awards were awarded to three Slovenian restaurants, **Gostilna pri Lojzetu - Dvorec Zemono, Hiša Franko and Vila Podvin.**

**The award for the National TOP 3 was presented by Belmond d.o.o. Each winner received Diplomatico Single Vintage 2005 rum.**

For more information go to <http://the-slovenia.com/tsra>

**The future of TSRA selection**

Niko Slavnič expressed: *“The future of great food is always bright. The short-term future, however, depends on the development of cuisine by both restaurants and consumers, all affected by the pandemic. Nevertheless, we will still be carrying out a dinner of surpluses, The Slovenia Dinner with top chefs. This is expected in the autumn of this year at a very special location in Ljubljana. We will also adapt the selection to the needs and possibilities of the market, as the state has still not found an ear for foreign restaurant selections.”*