



Kostuch Media Ltd. Announces 2019 Pinnacle Award Winners

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TORONTO — Kostuch Media Ltd., publisher of industry magazines *Foodservice and Hospitality* and *Hotelier*, has unveiled the 2019 winners of its prestigious Pinnacle Awards. This year marks the 31st anniversary of the “Oscars of the industry.”

Quebec-based Copper Branch is *F&H*’s Company of the Year, while Hilton has been named *Hotelier*’s Company of the Year.

Other category winners for *Foodservice and Hospitality* include Joseph Richard Group for Regional Company of the Year (West) and Balzac’s Coffee Roasters for Regional Company of the Year (East); Waterloo, Ont.-based Charcoal Group for Independent Restaurateur of the Year; and Alex Chen for Chef of the Year. Supplier of the Year honours go to Flanagan Foodservice Inc.

On the hotel side, this year’s winner of *Hotelier*’s Regional Company of the Year is Palm Holdings.

Hotelier of the Year honours go to Edwin Frizzell, regional vice-president, Accor Central Canada and GM of Toronto’s iconic Fairmont Royal York.

Renard International Hospitality Search Consultants — which is celebrating 50 years as an industry leader in hospitality executive search — is this year’s Supplier of the Year.

Over the past year, Company of the Year, Montreal-based Copper Branch, announced plans to open 50 new locations over the next decade. Five of these openings are slated to happen within the next year, including Copper Branch’s first-ever Vancouver outpost and several spots located in the GTA and near Montreal. In January, the company opened two new stores in France, one in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. and one in New York City. Founder Rio Infantino is also planning to open locations in the Netherlands and Monaco. The company has found instant success with its plant-based menu offerings and holds the distinction of being the largest and fastest-growing plant-based fast-casual chain in the world.

This year, the Regional Company of the Year: West, Surrey, B.C.-based Joseph Richard Group, launched a series of “ghost restaurants” as a way to meet growing consumer demand for delivered meals. The company, which owns 25 establishments — including pubs, restaurants, liquor stores and the Steveston Hotel — also signed an operating agreement with the owners of Glass House Estate Winery and opened its Stanley Park Brewing Restaurant and Brewpub.

The Regional Company of the Year: East, Ancaster, Ont.-based Balzac’s Coffee Roasters is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year. Since opening its first location in Stratford, Ont., the much-loved coffee chain has opened 13 more coffee shops in the province — the most recent in Toronto’s Billy Bishop Airport — and has plans to open an additional four over the next year or so.

It was a big year for Kitchener, Ont.-based Charcoal Group, this year's Independent Restaurateur. The company has undertaken two extensive renovations in recent months — at Wildcraft and at Charcoal Steak House in Kitchener — and opened a number of new restaurants, including an Oakville, Ont. outpost of its Beertown Public Houses, followed by planned openings in Toronto, Barrie, Ont. and Guelph, Ont. The Toronto location, opening in the fall at the busy downtown intersection of University Avenue and Wellington Street, is Charcoal Group's first foray into the city.

This year's Chef of the Year award is being presented to Alex Chen. Since overseeing the genesis of Boulevard Kitchen & Oyster Bar in 2014, Chen has earned the restaurant a full complement of accolades while proving his culinary mettle on an international scale. After leading Team Canada to a top-10 finish at the 2013 Bocuse d'Or in Lyon, France, he went on to steer Boulevard to the top spot in both the 2015 and '17 editions of the annual Gold Medal Plates B.C. regional championships, as well as the gold medal at the 2018 Canadian Culinary Championships.

On the hotel side, Hilton Canada has revolutionized the hotel industry, meeting the challenge of disruption in the hospitality industry by diversifying its brand offerings to meet the requirements of a new generation. Hilton's Canadian portfolio grew to 137 properties in 2018 (up from 113 the year before) and recorded gross sales of \$900 million — up from \$844 million in 2017.

Hotelier's Regional Company of the Year, Palm Holdings, began by buying older real-estate assets, improving them through comprehensive renovations and reselling. That business model has since shifted to acquiring hotels and creating value through renovations, operations and a longer-term investment outlook. Palm's portfolio includes properties in Canada, the United Kingdom and the U.S. Earlier this year, the company announced plans to develop a new 150-room hotel in Naples, Fla. after acquiring a waterfront property that includes a marina and a restaurant.

Edwin Frizzell, regional vice-president, Accor Central Canada and the general manager of Fairmont Royal York, has spent the last two years overseeing the multi-million-dollar renovation of the Toronto landmark, while responsible for 11 hotels across Accor's Central Canada region. Frizzell has extensive experience in the hotel industry, having worked at the Chelsea Hotel, the Sheraton Centre and the Westin Harbour Castle. He is currently chair of the Greater Toronto Hotel Association.

In addition to its regular slate of Pinnacle Awards, this year, the Rosanna Caira Lifetime Achievement Award will be presented to renowned chef John Higgins, director of the George Brown Chef School in Toronto. Higgins has cooked for the Queen at Buckingham Palace, on the Royal Yacht Britannia, for heads of state in Washington and for celebrities around the world. During his long tenure in the hotel industry, Higgins worked at both the Four Seasons Hotel and the King Edward Hotel, where he mentored many of the industry's top chefs. This past year, he also served as the president of the Bocuse d'Or Team Canada for the biennial competition held in Lyon, France.

"For more than 30 years, we've been shining the spotlight on companies and individuals who are achieving success in the hospitality industry through innovation, creativity and a steadfast focus on excellence," says Rosanna Caira, editor and publisher at Kostuch Media Ltd. "This year's winners reflect the importance of staying current in a landscape that continues to be disrupted."

Since launching the first award in 1988, *Foodservice and Hospitality* has honoured a diverse group of leaders for their continued success and achievements, representing every facet of the industry, from upscale restaurants to quick-service chains. Each of this year's winners are distinguished for their contributions to the image of the industry through civic, educational and community involvement, as well as their efforts in establishing innovative concepts in foodservice or hotel management. Past winners include George Cohon of McDonald's Restaurants of Canada Ltd., The TDL Group, Starbucks Canada

and Four Seasons Hotels founder, Isadore Sharp. *Hotelier* magazine's first annual Hotelier of the Year award, representing similar achievement in the hotel industry, was presented in 1994 to hotel executives Robert DeMone, Canadian Pacific Hotels & Resorts; Michael Beckley, Commonwealth Hospitality; and Simon Cooper, Delta Hotels & Resorts.

For more information please contact: Rosanna Caira at (416) 447-0888, ext. 224
or rcaira@kostuchmedia.com