



Open Hours : **Mon-Sat: 11:00am - Late**

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A close-up photograph of several cocktail glasses. One glass in the foreground is filled with a vibrant green liquid, likely a cocktail. The background is softly blurred, showing warm, bokeh light spots from a bar setting.

Media/Reviews

[Young Entrepreneur, NZ Herald, Monday Oct 13, 2014](#)

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CHAPTER SIX | BEST MENU

Rising Star

The Wellington restaurant scene has a new star. At only 22, Samuel North is a chef to watch.

Wellington has a new rising star on the food scene, with the 22-year-old head chef and owner of Muse on Allen taking out the MINDFOOD Best Menu Wellington On a Plate Award for 2013.

The award recognises the creativity and skill of the region's chefs, and the ways in which they showcase local ingredients through the festival's Dine Wellington programme.

Muse On Allen, which has been open for less than a year, impressed the judges with every aspect of the dining experience.

"Their menu was a success from start to finish, with perfect wine matches," says judge and Editor-in-Chief of MINDFOOD,

Michael McHugh. "Each dish was beautifully presented and had multi levels of flavours and texture, giving the diner an exceptional experience."

McHugh says the Goodbye Pork Pie was a stand-out dish, adding that a pie never tasted so good. He described the chef's light and crispy pastry and candy apple sauce as "brilliant".

Fellow judge Michael Meredith, executive chef of Auckland restaurant Merediths, agreed. "As a menu it all worked. It built and showed great balance between flavour, technique and cooking. The experience blew me away, as did the Wairarapa lamb shank croquette with mint and green pea soup. As far as starters go, it's a must-try."

Muse on Allen's 22-year-old head chef and owner, Samuel North, says his menu was all about using simple flavours and ingredients, but in new ways. "For me it's about using basic produce like shallots and peas and turning them into something unexpected, something with wow-factor."

A big fan of Michael Meredith, North said it was "nerve racking" having him in his restaurant. Having been part of the inaugural award-winning team at The White House Restaurant, which won the award in 2012, has stood North in good stead as to what to expect from the win.

"My first thought after hearing we'd won was that there's going to be a whole lot more people in the restaurant from now on ... and we don't hold that much stock!

"But in all seriousness, I'm just really happy for both the team and the restaurant."

MUSE ON ALLEN
16/18-24 Allen Street
Wellington
Wellington CBD

MINDFOOD BEST MENU WELLINGTON ON A PLATE WINNING MENU 2013 - MUSE ON ALLEN



STARTER

A pretty dish of lamb shank croquette with mint and pea soup.



STARTER

Goodbye Pork Pie with candy apple sauce. Delicious!



MAIN

Pork sausage and fillet with crackling and carrot puree.



MAIN

Chicken and egg: don't let the simple name fool you. It's amazing.



DESSERT

From grandma's garden, poached rhubarb with Zany Zeus yoghurt.



CHEESE

Local cheese selection with homemade chutney.

RISING STAR

At 22, Samuel North beat his former boss and established chefs to win a top restaurant award, writes **Sarah Catherall**.

SAMUEL NORTH is not your typical restaurateur. At just 22, he's thought to be the youngest chef running his own dining establishment in Wellington. In fact, he was 21 when he launched Muse on Allen in the former site of Satay Kampong restaurant at the top of Allen St.

When he heads to work on Tuesday to Sunday evenings, North is the youngest in his team. His restaurant manager, Nino, is 40, while his sous chef is in her 30s. "I grew a beard to try to look older," he jokes.

His age isn't the only notable thing, though. Since Muse on Allen opened, North has notched up awards, most recently the top accolade in the Wellington on a Plate (WOAP) food festival for his Dine Wellington menu.



Tasty winner: Samuel North's lamb croquette with pea soup wowed judges.

"I had to be here at 9am, which is a struggle for me. They liked the simplicity of the food but it was done in a different way.

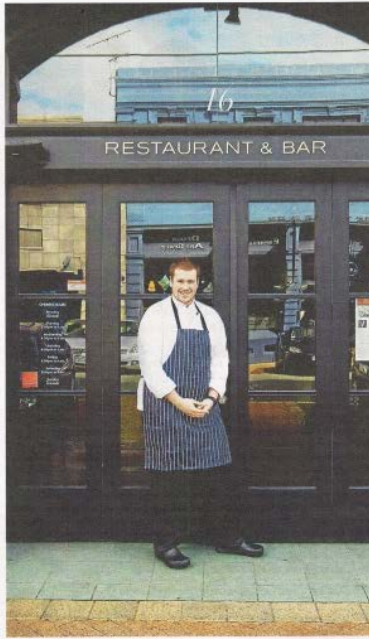
Samuel North

For that, North served dishes that wowed the judges, and he beat established chefs such as Martin Bosley and Wairarapa's Antony North, a Michelin Star chef who North ironically worked under in a previous job.

For his menu, he served lamb shank croquettes with pea soup as an entree, along with a pork pie with apple sauce. For the main dish, diners were treated to a chicken breast with a local ragout, and dessert was a yoghurt and honey panacotta. The judges praised his menu for the festival's Dine programme as "a success from start to finish" with beautiful presentation and layered flavours.

The award recognised the creativity and skill of the region's chefs, and their use of local ingredients.

One of North's heroes, Auckland chef Michael Meredith, of Auckland's Meredith's, said:



Dishy: Samuel North outside his Wellington restaurant.

Photo: MAARTEN HOLL/FAIRFAX NZ

"As a menu it all worked. It built and showed great balance between flavour, technique and cooking. The experience blew me away, as did the Wairarapa lamb shank croquette with mint and green pea soup. As far as starters go, it's a must-try."

Says North: "I had to be here at 9am, which is a struggle for me. They liked the simplicity of the food but it was done in a different way. They also liked my wine matching. I served Gladstone wines rather than the usual ones from Martinborough."

The wine matching has been something he has grown to enjoy. "I used to think wine was terrible stuff," laughs North.

Similarly, he fell into cooking and for much of his career considered throwing it away as he didn't like the pressure-cooker environment. While his grandmother is a keen gardener and cook — he served vegetables from her Wairarapa garden for his WOAP menu — he doesn't hail from a foodie family. "My family has no passion for cooking. I see them cooking now



Ravishing tuna: One of the most popular dishes on his menu.

and think, "Why are you doing that?"

It was only because he passed home economics and he enjoyed cooking that he went from school to a restaurant kitchen. Aged 16, he got his first job at Bellamy's Restaurant at Parliament as a kitchenhand. A year later, he started his apprenticeship at the Holiday Inn, and spent the next four years shifting around restaurant kitchens, picking up skills along the way.

"I guess I got bored quickly. But when you work in hotels you do get the chance to work with chefs from different countries, and I learned from chefs from Germany, Switzerland, that kind of thing."

In his most recent job at the White House as chef de partie, he read about Martin Bosley starting a restaurant at the age of 21, and says: "I was inspired by that. I thought I could do that. I started looking at places up for sale. We looked at 19 different places before we found this one."

Bosley was also a finalist in the Dine Wellington award, and his Cloudy Bay clams scored a 10 out of 10.

In three weeks, North will celebrate the first anniversary of his restaurant. His menu has already been given four stars by food critic David Burton, who paid particular note of his sashimi-grade tuna. Served with ginger caramel, grapefruit and pork crackling, North says it is one of his most popular entrees, and he's often asked for the recipe.

This rising star was also a finalist in the Capital Awards emerging chef category.

Nursing a cold in the wake of WOAP, when his 45-seat restaurant was booked out night after night, this young chef has no time to get bored any more.

MUSE ON ALLEN

★★★★
 16 Allen St, City
 ph: 04-384 1181
 museonallen.co.nz
 Dinner Tues-Sat
 Mains: \$29-\$33

Samuel North is following the dream of every ambitious young chef. Having served his time in hotels and fine-dining restaurants, he has now branched out on his own. North has taken over a long, thin venue in Allen St, at the heart of the Courtenay entertainment district, which began life some 15 years ago as a jostling, noisy bar, The Elbow Room.

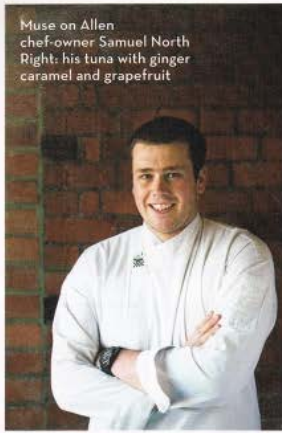
Muse on Allen invites speculation as to its meaning; perhaps the name refers to the Tenth Muse, created out of nowhere by Brillat-Savarin in the 19th century to make up for the fact that nowhere among the nine Muses of Classical Antiquity was a Goddess of Taste. (Such a pity the name he invented for her - Gasteraea - conveys such dire connotations to our Anglo Saxophone ears!)

Muse's front of house has benefited from various accretions, not least a grand bar installed by its predecessor, Satay Kampong, and now clearly partitioned off from the dining area by a long white screen, running almost the length of the room. Black tablecloths, white linen napkins and polished service are indicative of Muse's refined culinary style, which is big on spare, clearly delineated presentation, with few garnishes and no frills.

Perhaps the best dish is sashimi-grade tuna with ginger caramel, grapefruit and pork crackling. Each and every pretty component snaking semi-randomly across the platter is there for the sake of function as well as form: the tiny wedges of grapefruit provide sourness, the powdered ginger caramel offers sweetness, the tiny cubes of soy sauce gel contribute saltiness, while the crunchy nuggets of pork crackling are in satisfying textural contrast to the softness of the tuna. Even a scattering of pretty-pretty microgreens packs a powerful coriander-type punch.

North was previously chef de partie at The White House, so it's no wonder that both the carrot and orange puree

Muse on Allen chef-owner Samuel North
 Right: his tuna with ginger caramel and grapefruit



served with the pork belly and the coffee jus beneath the roasted lamb rump were silken smooth, syrupy and vividly flavoured, with both orange and coffee notes well railed back and the balance of tastes well maintained. It's just that there was simply not enough of each sauce. It's reasonable to expect that there should be enough sauce on the customer's plate for each forkful of meat. Two or three tablespoons of jus, however artfully splashed around the lamb, did not fulfil this criteria, and nor did the elegant little sploche of the carrot and orange puree with the pork; sadly, it was all over too soon.

A starter of tempura oysters cried out for something like a ponzu sauce to accompany it, but was served simply with a wedge of lemon.

It's not as if North is intentionally being stingy, as our portions of pork and lamb, the expensive protein heroes of the dish, were about average. Nevertheless, trenchermen be warned: do order a side of chips, as you won't be filled up by the tiny balls of potato confit, so painstakingly cut with a melon baller and so pretty, that form a necklace around the lamb.

Another side, the green salad of young rocket, pleased us greatly. Drenched with balsamic dressing, it came with thin, crisp slices of pear, shaved parmesan and shards of candied macadamia nut. The combination was so delicious, I've subsequently replicated it at home.



A creme brulee, served in a teacup with a great retro blob of Baileys-laced whipped cream, filled any empty corners in our stomachs, and just to make sure we wouldn't go home hungry, there were three small doughnuts around the rim of the plate, deep-fried and resting on dabs of jam.

The Tenth Muse would no doubt be pleased with the flavours delivered by this temple of good taste, though on her behalf I'd request a libation of extra sauce. **DAVID BURTON**

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MINDFOOD Wellington on a Plate Award Winner

Cuisine Magazine

MUSE EATERY & BAR © (2016)

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