

Scottish Excellence Awards – the Edinburgh winners

Edinburgh's Mercat Tours has celebrated its 40th anniversary with a double win in the Scottish Excellence Awards, billed as "the ultimate accolade for businesses and individuals working in Scottish hospitality, foodservice and tourism".

The independent family business, founded by a history teacher in 1985, took the Wellbeing in Hospitality and Employment Engagement and Retention Award trophies at a ceremony at The Hilton Glasgow.

The company enjoys a staff absence rate of just 2%, a retention rate of 75% and a 96% team satisfaction rating. It was the first Scottish tourism business to achieve Living Hours accreditation, a standard which asks employers to provide the rights to decent notice periods for shifts, a contract that reflects accurate hours worked, and a guaranteed minimum of 16 hours per week.

Mercat specialises in expert-led tours of Scotland's capital and the WWI and WWII battlefields of Europe.

Edinburgh Winners

Mathew Sherry, Head Chef of Number One at the Balmoral, took a Highly Commended certificate in the Chef of the Year category, as did Dean Banks, whose restaurants include the Pompadour at the city's Caledonian Hotel.

Judges said Sherry "has a skill for showcasing the best Scottish produce and is sure to be a powerhouse of the Scottish food scene for many years to come."

They described Banks as "an innovative chef whose entrepreneurial spirit has set him apart in the industry. Through his restaurants and ventures, he has showcased a deep commitment to quality, sustainability and bold flavours, always championing the best of what Scotland has to offer."

The Chef of the Year title went to Calum Montgomery, Chef-Patron of the four-AA-Rosette Edinbane Lodge on the Isle of Skye.

Other Edinburgh finalists included the Rutland Hotel in the Group Hotel of the Year category, and Executive Chef Jonny Wright's The Spence at Gleneagles Townhouse, in the Restaurant of the Year Award.

The Edinburgh International Conference Centre was shortlisted in two categories – New Zealand-born Head Chef, Adrian Knibbs, for Banqueting and Events Chef of the Year, and also in the Sustainable Business category.



Mathew Sherry, Head Chef of Number One The Balmoral Edinburgh



Mercat Tours won the Employment Engagement and Retention Award



Mercat Tours won the Wellbeing in Hospitality Award