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# MasterChef rivals pick up prestigious national honours

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**T**WO of the region's top chefs who came to national prominence after competing against each other in the 2010 finals of MasterChef: The Professionals, are celebrating scooping prestigious culinary honours this week.

John Calton of The Staith House on North Shields Fish Quay has been named Gastropub Chef of the Year, while Dave Coulson's acclaimed Peace and Loaf restaurant in Jesmond had been awarded two AA Rosettes.

John, who opened The Staith House at the end of 2013 with wife Kimberley and friend and fellow chef James Lafan, picked up his influential accolade at this week's Estrella Damm Top 50 Gastropubs Awards.

The Staith House also saw itself catapulted onto the Top 50 Gastropub list, coming straight in at number 31.

Three other pubs from the region also made it onto the list. The Rat Inn at Anick, near Hexham, Northumberland, is at number 13, along with The Broad Chare (28) and The Bridge Tavern (49), both in Newcastle.

The honours come at the end of a phenomenal year for John, who has seen The Staith House also pick up the Pub of the Year title at the Star Pub national Awards, Best Food Pub in the UK courtesy of the Great British Pub Awards 2015, and gain runners-up

spots in the Best Sunday Lunch and Best Restaurant categories in the Observer Food Monthly Awards.

John, 34, was presented with his Gastropub Chef of the Year title by the two Michelin star chef Tom Kerridge at an event held at the Heritage Road Bar and Restaurant in Hitchin, Hertfordshire.

John is understandably ecstatic with this latest honour: "I still can't believe I've been given this national award. It's the best one to win other than being the number one gastropub. It's an extraordinary achievement for us."

John has also competed this week in the finals of The Parliamentary Pub Chef of the Year in London.

He had just an hour to devise and cook a dish from a mystery box of ingredients to impress the judges.

He will have to wait until February 23, however, to find out if his dish of brill, scallops, celeriac and artichokes, was good enough to win the coveted title, for which he was nominated by Tynemouth Labour MP Alan Campbell.

Meanwhile Dave Coulson's Peace and Loaf, which opened around the same time as The Staith House, has

been awarded two AA Rosettes, with a recommendation for a third.

Two Rosettes - only achieved by around 40% of restaurants and hotels - means the venue on Jesmond Road has achieved an 'excellent' status, 'which aim for and achieve higher

standards, better consistency and where a greater precision is apparent in the cooking.'

■ See tomorrow's Taste pages for a full interview with John at Staith House and Dave Coulson.



➤ John Calton at The Staith House on North Shields Fish Quay



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