



Australian Culinary Federation

Sidney Taylor Memorial Black Hat Award

Black Hat: The historical context

Part One

This historical context (Part one) shall always remain to form a part of the criteria for the selection process of a Black Hat to ensure that the original intent of the award is never disregarded.

Origin of the Black Hat - 1990 by Aelfryn Bailey - [R.I.P]

Black in the context of the "Sidney Taylor Memorial Black Hat Award" has no connection with the long established European custom of wearing black clothes as a sign of mourning.

To understand the origin of the Black Hat is to understand that the Romans in the 7th century, when in England, organized the many different little kingdoms into a single church order. In doing so, they helped to create the unity of England. In the 11th century, the Norman conquerors arrived in England and set about building castles, churches and monasteries throughout the land, using the cheapest building materials possible - the stones from nearby quarries. Many of these monasteries offered food and rest to many a weary traveler - for a price - thus sowing the seeds of what was to become the catering industry with professional cooks being employed.

In the 14th century, the introduction of brick making and laying revolutionised the building and design of all types and sizes of dwellings and structures. It brought about the building of fireplaces, ovens and chimneys. It allowed the temperature of ovens to be controlled by the use of flue plates and controlled draught into the chimney. The humble brick has played a very important part in the history of English cookery.

In the 15th century, the English Worshipful Company of Cooks was chartered in the year of 1482, although it had been founded nearly 50 years prior to the charter. It is both the oldest and most senior of all British professional cooks' organisations and is still in existence. The Worshipful Company of Cooks is incorporated in the Cookery and Food Association U.K., which was founded in 1885 and enrolled by Special Authority of the Lords of The Treasury in 1891.

- Currently, it is under, as appropriate the patronage of:

- Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II.

- The Queen Mother

- Her Royal Highness - The Princess Royal

It is interesting to note that it was a strict rule of the Worshipful Company of Cooks was that no girl should be apprenticed.

In the 18th century, cooks either did not wear a hat, or wore a shapeless white cap pulled into a variety of styles to suit the whim of the wearer.

Although it is known that cooks in some monasteries wore the old or discarded black skullcaps of the monks during the latter part of the 17th century, it is now generally accepted that the black cap originated in a London Hotel in the mid 19th century.

The black skull cap as headgear for an English Master Craftsman or Professional Cook originated in the 1840's at the famous Reform Club and was a black velvet cap from which a tassel dangled. It was several years later when the flamboyant and brilliant culinary artist, Alexis Soyer became Maitre Chef des Cuisines of the Reform Club that the black cap became famous through the publicity that Soyer attracted by wearing a tall vivid red chef's hat until the black skull cap took his fancy.

Soyer worked with Florence Nightingale in the Crimea to improve the standard of food for the wounded British soldiers in military hospitals. Generations of British army cooks even up to the 1960's will have fond memories of the "Soyer Boiler" a vital piece of field kitchen equipment. The Worshipful Company of Cooks fostered the wearing of the black skullcap but only by selected top class cooks. In England, the black skull cap is still worn by the Master Cook [being the equivalent of the French Maitre Chef de Cuisine or the American Executive Chef] at the famous English-Style restaurant "Simpson's in the Strand". The Black Cap Master Cook would stand in front of the customers with his hot trolley carving juicy slices of red sirloin beef. It is traditional at London's Guildhall when Royalty is present for English Black Cap Cooks to enter the hall and carve the huge barons [saddles] of beef.

And so since 1980 the tradition continues in Australia - our version: The Sidney Taylor Memorial Black Hat Award - is the traditional tall chef's hat entirely in Black.

The award has two symbols.

Symbol 1

The Sidney Taylor Memorial Black Hat Award Trophy

The trophy is presented by the recipient's peers, in this case the Full Committee of the Australasian Guild of Professional Cooks Ltd (Now Australian Culinary Federation Victoria) to the chef to be held for 12 months by the new member or until a worthy successor is found.

Symbol 2

Awardees are entitled to continue to wear a traditional style Black Hat as a holder of the highest recognition given by his or her counterparts.

It is not an award to recognise cookery skill, but to recognise the recipient's contribution to the development of Australian professional cookery fraternity.

Australasian Guild of Professional Cooks Ltd - Now the Australian Culinary Federation Victoria

The Sidney Taylor Memorial Black Hat Award - Selection Criteria

Criteria to be followed for the selection of a recipient of the Sid Taylor Memorial Black Hat

The selection criteria below were first developed in 1980 by G. Hill and J.M Miller. Organisation names and the way they operate have changed, and processes may be modified, however the original "intent" of the selection criteria should remain the same.

The Sid Taylor Memorial Black Hat [S.T.M.B.H. shall be the name of the award.

1. *The Committee will from time to time form a sub - committee to discuss and decide the suitability of the Nominee.*
2. *The sub - committee shall consist of two officers and three Guild members who shall discuss and present their recommendation to the full Committee.*
3. *The S.T.M.B.H. will be awarded to a named cook / chef at a full committee meeting if a unanimous decision is reached by secret committee ballot.*
4. *The nominee must have been or be a Cook / Chef by reputation not necessarily by qualification.*
5. *The nominee must be well known in the industry for being :*

[i] Professional;

[ii] Enthusiastic;

[iii] Good-natured;

[iv] Conscientious;

[v] Ethical.

6. *Only Chefs, who have made outstanding contributions to Australian culinary progress and development at the highest trade or professional level, will be considered for this prestigious award.*
7. *The proposer who is member of the Guild in good standing must provide properly documented evidence of the proposed Chef's outstanding contribution to Australian culinary community progress and development over a minimum period of ten years. A copy of exacting documentation is to be provided to each member of the sub - committee , so that a close scrutiny of the evidence can be achieved and further investigated if necessary by any member of the sub - committee.*
8. *When and to whom this award will be made will be entirely at the discretion of the full committee.*
9. *Awardees of the Black Chef's Hat Award will also be given the following privileges:*
10. *The rights to hold in care the Black Chef's Hat trophy for a period of twelve months only. After that time the award - trophy should be returned to the Australasian Guild of Professional Cooks Ltd.*
11. *The right to wear a cloth replica of the Black Chef's Hat whenever he / she choose.*
12. *The right to receive an Honorary Life Membership of the Australasian Guild of Professional Cooks Ltd. now the Australian Culinary Federation Victoria*
13. *The right to have his or her name engraved on a miniature plaque, attached to the Black Chef's Hat Award, in perpetuity.*

14. *The privilege of receiving a framed photograph of the S.T.M.B.H. with an awarding Certificate - the certificate shall be properly sealed with the Guild's Official Seal, an endorsement of the recipient will be boldly printed on the Certificate.*
15. *The S.T.M.B.H. shall not be open for personal application; no personal lobbying for the award will be countenanced.*
16. *The nominated Chef is not to be informed of the investigation into his / her credentials for the award, nor is he / she to be given any "leaked" information that may lead to speculative conclusions.*
17. *The award will be announced at a Guild Annual General Meeting by the President and be presented to the recipient during the Guilds Annual Ball.*
18. *Anyone chef who wears a classical Black Hat without endorsement shall be considered guilty of unprofessional conduct by the guild and , if a member , shall be excluded from membership of the organisation.*

Ends Historical Context

Addendums

In 2006, the following recommendations were received from The Sidney Taylor Memorial Black Hat Award subcommittee to the ACF national executive committee.

The Black Hat may be awarded to a member of industry not necessarily confined to members of the ACF Victoria

ACF Victoria may award a maximum of three [3] black hats in any given year.

ACF Victoria may elect not to award a black hat in any given year.

Part two.

Black Hat Update August 2011.

These suggested updates were developed by David Payne and living Black Hats; J. M Miller OAM, B. Uber, and George Hill to reflect the original selection criteria written in the late 1970's by John Miller and George Hill.

Part two - Rules

The full name of the award is "Sidney Taylor Memorial Black Hat Award"

The Black Hat is an Australia commercial cookery honor bestowed by the Australian Culinary Federation Victoria. Previously known as: The Australasian Guild of professional Cooks LTD (AGPC)

The Black Hat Award is to be considered the highest achievement given to a commercial chef to recognise their contribution and commitment to the commercial cookery industry and must be measurably and significantly beyond that would be expected in a normal career of a chef.

It is an award that recognises industry commitment not necessarily skill

A chef cannot receive the award more than once

A chef cannot be removed as a Black Hat as it is an award for life

The award entitles the recipient to wear a classical black hat at any ceremonial chef's event

Who can be nominated?

Any working or previously practicing chef

Nominations may be received from:

Any:

Australian Culinary Federation Member (Australia wide)

Any chef's organisation or professional hospitality and Tourism body

The nominated chef:

Must have worked for at least the last ten years in Australia

While preferable, the nominated chef does not have to be a member of the Australian Culinary Federation

The chef being nominated should not be approached for information or advised of his or her nomination at any stage.

The degree, value and length of time of the contribution to commercial cookery, rather than merely length of industry service, is the primary focus of the award

Format for nomination:

Nominations must be on the official nomination form, should include a resume and may include additional documentation on which an objective decision can be made by an award committee

A prescribed application booklet forms the part of the nomination process.

A member wishing to nominate a Black hat may apply to the ACF for a nomination booklet.

What should a nomination include?

Nominations must include the application form and should include a broad resume including positions held in the industry, extra curricula activity, committees and projects involved with to demonstrate above and beyond that would normally be expected of a commercial chef's career

It is important to provide specific examples of how the chef has contributed the commercial cookery industry.

How are nominations assessed?

The Australian Culinary Federation Victoria will convene a Black Hat award committee to evaluate a nomination.

The committee should be a minimum of five that may include a maximum of two external to committee members

The awards committee will be bound by these awards criteria

The committee will appoint a "research committee member" who will also chair the sub committee

The appointed chair must be a member of the full committee

The nominator will be expected to attend a subcommittee meeting to put their nomination case verbally.

The chair may or may not ask (in confidence) existing Black Hats for advice and opinion on selection or process and report back to the sub committee

Should the subcommittee require further evidence the chair may approach (in confidence) any existing president of a state organisations or in the absence any other appropriate professional for advice and opinion on selection and report back to the subcommittee. This rule is limited to advice from the local president or local colleague only.

When sufficient evidence is deemed adequate by the chair, a totally confidential vote will be taken by the subcommittee committee who write yes or, no on a blank piece of folded paper.

In Subcommittee the decision must be unanimous to move forward

The nominator does not have a vote in any decision

The chair person opens and reads YES or NO which is confidentially recorded in committee

Successful nominee names are referred back to the full committee with basic reasons for a successful decision.

Unsuccessful nominees are only reported back as being unsuccessful on this occasion

All decisions, discussions and outcomes will always be in camera and guests will be asked to leave during Black Hat nomination discussions and / or votes

The full committee after hearing the basic evidence of a successful nominee will take a simple and totally confidential vote on the candidate endorsed by the subcommittee

The president opens and reads YES NO which is recorded in committee

In full committee a unanimous yes vote is required.

In the event of a drawn vote in full committee the respective chair /president shall have a **second casting vote.**

At that point the successful candidates will be recorded in the minute book.

Confidentiality

All nominations including any decisions are strictly in professional confidence. This is a pre and post professional expectation upon the full committee, awards committee any person involved and the nominator.

In the event of a successful nomination, the nominator, subcommittee chair or the presiding president will present the successful decision of the awards committee and full committee to an annual general meeting.

The successful chef is then named in the minutes of the AGM as a Black Hat from that day forward

In the event of an unsuccessful nomination all documents are to be destroyed and no mention will appear in any minutes of any meeting

How are nominations informed?

Only successful recipients are subsequently advised in writing of the award and invited to the annual general meeting to be inducted by existing Black Hats who will be invited to attend. If a candidate is unsuccessful, they may be nominated up to three attempts in subsequent years. Each nomination must be made afresh.

Nomination Paperwork for *'The Sidney Taylor Memorial Black Hat Award'*

Please read **'Part A – Selection Criteria'**, then complete **'Part B – Nomination Form'**, (both available on the ACFV web site, then post 'Part B' to The ACF Victoria clearly marked **Confidential BLACK HAT NOMINATION** and only to be opened by the President.

Verbal nominations are not accepted

Please attach a resume and any supporting documents.

Post to:

President ACF Victorian Chapter
Confidential Black Hat Nomination
PO Box 115, Kew East VIC 3102

There are some important points to be addressed by all those who are involved in the decision process:

- It is very difficult to ethically, morally and objectively give an opinion of another person's worth. For being judgmental is almost unjust and who has the right to judge others?
- However if that opinion and position is accepted, we should not and would never have had a Black Hat Award.
- As hard or seemingly unfair as it is - if asked an opinion, one must give an opinion either positively or negatively and in all honesty.
- On the provision that the opinion is unbiased and always totally confidential.