



2012 Award Winners GEORGINA CAMPBELL AWARD 2012

NEVEN MAGUIRE – MAC NEAN HOUSE & RESTAURANT, BLACKLION, CO CAVAN

A recently introduced award, in recognition of the special contribution made by exceptional individuals in Irish hospitality

Awards like this are usually associated with people of 'mature years' who have given a lifetime to Irish hospitality. Well, this year's winner started very young! He was working alongside his mother, Vera in their restaurant kitchen from the age of twelve – and he was still a teenager, fresh out of catering college, when Georgina Campbell first visited this (now very famous) restaurant for the Irish Press in 1993

The young man in question is, of course, Neven Maguire and it was an all-family affair, with his father, the late Joe Maguire, heading up front of house – and although much bigger now (and employing dozens of people locally), one of Neven's great achievements is to have retained that sense of family and community

Never tempted to move to the bright lights, he made the world beat a path to his door instead, making the little border town of Blacklion one of Ireland's hottest culinary destinations. Way ahead of the trend for 'local and seasonal', Neven sought out the freshest and best in the immediate area and took pride in shouting about it – suppliers like the local Thornhill Duck became national names as a result and equally he has always been quick to credit the contribution made by other family members, notably his wife, Amelda

And, despite his commitment to the restaurant, popularity as a TV chef and author of best-selling cookbooks (and most recently, a cookery app), he has always been incredibly generous with his time too, as a celebrity supporter of food and charity events all over Ireland and beyond, including work for Bothar

This year's completion of an impressive extension that provides more rooms and spacious new reception and bar space to complement the restaurant is a turning point for MacNean House & Restaurant, making it the perfect time to look back

and see what a remarkable journey it has been for Neven, to date – extraordinary to think that he is still just a young married man, with all his own family life ahead of him

It's extraordinary too, especially in the depths of recession that his restaurant in the far north of Co Cavan is fully booked for months ahead. Always worth trying though – cancellations do occur!