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Fine food helps put L'Escargot in finals

By LINDSAY DAVIS

NEW PLYMOUTH'S L'Escargot restaurant has been named Taranaki-Wanganui finalist for the Restaurant of the Year award.

"I didn't know anything about it and then I got this letter and it was a complete shock," said restaurateur Andre Teissonniere.

For the last 13 years Auckland restaurant critic Michael Guy has organised the competition. This year 450 restaurants were sampled, from which 20 finalists were chosen.

"It (L'Escargot) came out top because it's one of a few restaurants in New Zealand doing French food in a genuine French way," said Mr Guy.

"One of our judges was from France and said it was as close as you can get to France.

"There really aren't a lot of restaurants like L'Escargot, as everyone in New Zealand is going into that brasserie style, so that creates a very boring eating style."

Mr Guy said he was especially pleased with the snails on the menu and said it was a dying art, as was the onion soup, which he described as being exceptional.



SAY SNAILS: Restaurateur Andre Teissonniere and partner Marilyn Jones toast their achievement in being selected for the finals of New Zealand's Restaurant Of The Year. The national winner will be announced in Auckland on Monday.

Photo: DWAYNE SENIOR

Trained by his parents near Montpellier, France, Mr Teissonniere said it was the first time his restaurant had been nominated. "I have my own style which is traditional. We are a provincial French restaurant but we have diversified slightly and adapted to demands."

Next year will be L'Escargot's 20th anniversary and Mr Teissonniere said the key to his success was having dedicated staff.

"The nomination is good for the business and after so many years it's a recognition that we have always done the best that we

could do," Mr Teissonniere said.

"I also think it is a great recognition for New Plymouth as people always think it is better somewhere else and yet here we are."

The national winner will be announced in Auckland on Monday.