

## DAVID HAWKSWORTH: THE VIEW FROM THE TOP

Anya Levykh — Westender



David Hawksworth was named Vancouver's Best Chef in Westender's 2015 Best of the City: Dining readers' poll. His eponymous restaurant picked up 19 awards in total, more than any other Vancouver eatery. Dan Toulgoet photo

Almost five years ago, David Hawksworth opened up a rather ambitious room for Vancouver. At a time when other fine-dining and upscale restaurants were closing their doors or re-inventing themselves as casual bistros, Hawksworth opened his eponymous restaurant in the Rosewood Hotel Georgia as an unabashedly elegant venture.

The risk paid off. Multiple accolades – including awards for best new restaurant, best chef, best wine list, best fine dining – from numerous publications (including this one) poured in during its first year. *Maclean's* called it the restaurant of the year. The awards haven't slowed down much since then, with the restaurant collecting golds both for its people and its food and beverage programs.

"I thought we were full when we opened up, but we've almost doubled the volume since then," Hawksworth admits.

Hawksworth is quick to give credit to those that have stood behind him since opening.

"It's evolving very nicely right now, and it's really a collaborative effort with the whole team."



**WINNER: BEST RESTAURANT**  
**WINNER: BEST FINE DINING**  
**WINNER: BEST CHEF**  
**(DAVID HAWKSWORTH)**  
**WINNER: BEST SERVICE**  
**WINNER: MOST ROMANTIC**  
**WINNER: BEST INTERIOR DÉCOR**  
**WINNER: BEST WINE LIST**  
**SECOND: BEST SOMMELIER**

And, it's not just the stars like Kristian Eligh, Chad Clark, Cooper Tardivel and Bryant Mao that he credits. When asked about a beautiful roasted romanesco salad I had for lunch one day, made with quark cheese, saffron white asparagus, watercress, meyer lemon vinaigrette, dukkah, and grated cured egg yolk, he credited sous chef Phil Scarfone. "And Wayne Kozinko [pastry chef] just keeps getting better and better," he adds.

Another reason for that success might be the steady focus on the kind of food they're aiming to create.

"The mandate for what I want to see is that it feel refreshing. We're veering away from anything too rich," explains Hawksworth. "We do have foie gras and stuff like that on the menu, but it's more about acidity and freshness of flavours. I think it's headed in the right direction."

That direction also includes the noted use of Asian flavours like yuzu and black sesame, among others.

"I think incorporating Asian flavours, to a degree – and Asian could mean Indian, Vietnamese, Thai, influences; we have such a melting pot here in Vancouver – is pretty indicative of where we live."

Also indicative of place is the fact that for such an upscale restaurant, neither the atmosphere nor prices are stuffy.

"It's not that 'fine-dining' here, to be honest," Hawksworth states. "I purposefully didn't use tablecloths. I never wanted to open a restaurant where people go only one time, and there are some people that we've tracked who have been here 300 times since we opened. Our prices aren't that much different from places like Cactus Club."

When asked about his plans for the next few years, he replied, laughing, "To still be here!" On a more serious note: "I think we've built something fairly sturdy. We're in a beautiful hotel, in a great spot. We have a great team. I don't want to make it too fussy here, but I still want to make this the kind of restaurant that, if there's one restaurant that you have to go to when you're in the Vancouver, I want this to be the place."

You would think that running the restaurant would be enough to keep him busy, especially with his new partnership with Air Canada, supplying their business lounges and first-class passengers with signature dishes, but apparently rest is for the lazy. A second, more casual restaurant is in the works and while Hawksworth wouldn't divulge the name, he did let slip that it's based on a children's fable. As for the food, "it's really more of an Italian-Mediterranean-Californian focus, with small share plates." Think Fresno chilli, a pizza oven, and high-quality olive oils. Opening is slated for March 2016.

## **Hawksworth**

**Rosewood Hotel Georgia**

**604-673-7000**

[HawksworthRestaurant.com](http://HawksworthRestaurant.com)

**(BRYANT MAO)**  
**SECOND: BEST BARTENDER**  
**(COOPER TARDIVEL)**  
**SECOND: BEST DESSERT**  
**SECOND: BEST CATERING**  
**SECOND: BEST PRIVATE**  
**DINING ROOM**  
**SECOND: BEST DOWNTOWN**  
**RESTAURANT**  
**SECOND: BEST DOWNTOWN BAR**  
**THIRD: BEST WEST COAST**  
**THIRD: BEST COCKTAILS**  
**THIRD: BEST COCKTAIL BAR**  
**THIRD: BEST DOWNTOWN BAR**  
**THIRD: BEST CATERING**