

# A stand-alone star

Steve Meacham – The Sydney Morning Herald Good Living September 6, 2011

**Quay's Peter Gilmore is finally honoured in his own right, writes Steve Meacham.**



Inventive ... Gilmore, creator of this special edition's cover. Photo: Marco Del Grande

When Peter Gilmore took over the kitchen at Quay in 2001, he took Sydney's dress-circle restaurant from one hat to three and has maintained that ranking for 10 consecutive years.

"I'm pretty sure it is a record of some sort," says Terry Durack, co-editor of the *Good Food Guide 2012*, which hands out the coveted awards. In fact, only Tetsuya's has had a longer run of three hats, before being downgraded to two in last year's guide.

Now Gilmore, head chef of Australia's only establishment to make the 2011 S. Pellegrino Top 50 Restaurants list, has won the *Good Food Guide's* coveted chef of the year award.

So why has he missed out on the personal award until now?

During the past decade, under different editors and different judging panels, the guide has consistently recognised Gilmore's inventive work.

"It's not an oversight " co-editor

who is coach, captain and leading goal scorer), the judges have regarded Quay's position in the top spot as acknowledgement enough of his standing.

"But in terms of being the person who represents where Australian food is - pushing the boundaries, continually trying to reinvent, to create, to deliver something very special, as well as mentoring his staff and being a role model, we felt it was time to formally acknowledge that Peter fully deserves the award," Savill says.

Durack goes further.

"Peter is fully deserving of the chef of the year award. In fact, I don't think anyone has ever cooked at this level before in Australia. Just as he hits a certain standard and you say, 'That's it; that's as high as he can possibly go,' because what he's done is so advanced, the next time you go to Quay, it has evolved and improved. He keeps pushing himself harder and harder.

"He is not a chef who is a screamer, a shouter and an abuser of his staff

grows his own edible flowers and herbs and really pushes the new, more natural, side of cuisine.

"The influence he is having on other chefs is very strong. You can see his ideas springing up on plates all over town."

Gilmore's book, *Quay*, which outlines his garden-to-plate philosophy, was a hit nationally and internationally last year. And to mark his 10th anniversary at Quay last month, Gilmore's staff cooked some of his top dishes for a small, private celebration, including his much-admired pork jowl with a maltose crust. Then, of course, there's the snow-egg dessert, a celebrity in its own right after its appearance on *MasterChef*.

So why hasn't he got his own TV show? "He does appear as a guest on television but only to publicise Quay, not himself," Durack says. "His snow egg is the hero as far as Peter is concerned - the food, not the chef."