



Insta-foodie stars

As online entry for the second Belgian Food Blog Awards opens, we meet last year's winners to find out what it takes to cook up a storm on social media

Words **Kerry Christiani** Illustrations **Script & Seal**



Left A lobster cocktail is one fun dish created by Ornelis; **Below** A seafood casserole

PHOTOS: DILUX FOTOGRAFIE, WOULD BE CHEF, STEFANIE CEERTS

The rising superstar

Would Be Chef Sven Ornelis



After conquering Belgian radio, this popular morning show host, TV presenter and writer has turned his attention to the kitchen – and the world of blogging

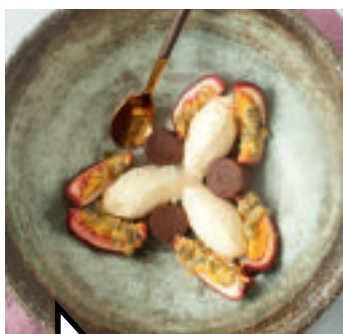
In the Belgian village of Rijmenam, just south of Antwerp, the winner of last year's Best Newcomer award is by no means your average food blogger – or newcomer. He's already got a major profile in Belgium for starters, thanks to his 25-year career as a radio DJ, presenting morning shows for stations including Qmusic and Joe. He's also a published author, poet and party DJ. Yet, food blogging is a new venture for the celebrity, who created his website De Would-Be Chef (wouldbechef.be) last year following two successful cookbooks under the same title, and as a way to express a lifelong passion for food. "I love to be creative in everything I do," the 45-year-old says. "Technically, I'm not the best chef, but I am creative and authentic – and no one wants you to be perfect anyway."

Citing social media as a "crazy and wonderful way to share things with people", Ornelis says the best thing about blogging is that you get to stay in control of what you do. "Food is not about being the biggest or best. Be yourself, be honest about what you like and don't like, and enjoy life over good food with great friends!" [@dewouldbechef](https://twitter.com/dewouldbechef)

Ornelis' favourite Belgian restaurant Het Gebaar, Antwerp

"The Michelin-starred restaurant of 'best pastry chef in the world' Roger van Damme. He uses all his experience to make the most beautiful and tasteful cuisine." hetgebaar.be





The chocoaholic

Hap en Tap Myriam Minne



“Life is short, so eat dessert first” is the perfect maxim for this sweet-toothed blogger, who is happiest when typing about her baking skills

Rose and raspberry mousse, mango and blueberry frangipane...

the hap-en-tap blog (hap-en-tap.be) is as sweet as digital temptation gets. “Belgian chocolate is my favourite,” says creator Myriam Minne. “I would die for chocolate.”

As Winner of the Best Baking & Sweets Food Blog Award 2017, Minne, from Lochristi near Ghent, might be a whizz with a whisk now, but it wasn’t always that way. “I didn’t grow up with cooking,” she confesses. “I first ate spaghetti Bolognese when I was 18 and thought it was exotic!” It wasn’t until the now 53-year-old attended a culinary school in her mid-30s that she developed her techniques – and passion – for cooking. “I started posting pics of my food on

Facebook and friends encouraged me to start a blog. Things just developed from there.”

While Minne now creates all kinds of culinary masterpieces, her favourite thing is to bake “because it’s very precise”. “I’m really happy with how things have turned out,” she adds. “I’m not interested in monetising my site. All I want to do is bake – and blog!” [@hap_en_tap](https://twitter.com/hap_en_tap)

Minne’s favourite Belgian restaurant Fleur de Lin, Zele

“I love everything about Fleur de Lin! The location, its industrial look, the lovely wines, the amazing owners, the delicious food and its good value!” fleurdelin.be

Clockwise from top left Pot de crème; a brownie with mascarpone mousse and X-gin; white chocolate mousse

“Baking desserts is what I like most as its so precise. Belgian chocolate is my favourite. I would die for chocolate.”



The expert mixer

Bible of Drinks Jonathan Scheerlinck



Stirring a novel twist into the drinks-blogging world, this bartender has poured his creativity into cocktails that are currently delighting Antwerp and, perhaps, one day, the world

Stepping into the urban-chic Bar Burbure in Antwerp, with its green tiles and copper fittings, you might well have the fortune of meeting 22-year-old Jonathan Scheerlinck, who snagged the Best Drinks Blog Award in 2017. “The bar scene in Antwerp is really having a moment,” he says. And if his cocktails are anything to go by, he’s not wrong.

After working in kitchens and restaurants, Scheerlinck realised his passion for mixology. He read, practised and talked to people with plenty of experience. “To be a good barman, it’s important to have personality. People like to see a combination of good drink-making skills and showmanship. I’ve also got a few cocktails with ingredients that you’d never put together, such as champagne,



Clockwise from bottom left Cocktails created by Scheerlinck for the Bible of Drinks blog include the lavender infused Autumn Gold; a smoked rosemary Negroni and the grapefruit-heavy Endless Summer



“I’ve got cocktails with ingredients you’d never put together, such as champagne, tomato and basil. I love surprising people”

tomato and basil. I love surprising my clients.”

The award came as a surprise to Scheerlinck, too. “When I started Instagramming two years ago, it was very impulsive. I just wanted to share my passion. Now, lots of brands are asking me to do work for them,” he says. His advice? “Be consistent, professional and keep it up. Great photos drive likes and clicks.” **@bibleofdrinks**

Scheerlinck’s favourite Belgian bar Dogma, Antwerp

“This is a very cool, speak-easy style bar. Order a sherry cobbler, made with sherry, oranges and syrup made with orange, egg white and lime juice.” **dogmacocktails.be**

Clockwise from below
Beautiful dishes on Stephanie
Bex's blog include slices of
smørrebrød, a chocolate tart
and chicken curry bagels



PHOTO: DULUX FOTOGRAFIE



The foodie insider

Koken op hakken Stephanie Bex



Food photography is an art unto itself – that can make or break a dish. Fortunately, this keen-eyed blogger is receiving tips and access to some of the best in the business

Growing up in Mol, Antwerp, alongside a family who loved cooking, had a big impact on 27-year-old Stephanie Bex, last year's winner of the Best Food Photography Blog Award category. "I started to blog five years ago, just taking iPhone photos, but my photography has really improved since," she says. "I taught myself, plus my day job is on a Belgian cookery TV channel – where I work with both really good food photographers and with a lot of inspiring Michelin-starred chefs. It means I have access to the experts – and a lot of inspiration!"

Since winning, Bex admits that the level of attention the blog has received has been overwhelming at times. Her tips for would-be food and photography bloggers? "Stay true to your style, be consistent and interact with your followers. Make sure you can clearly see the ingredients in a dish when styling your food, and don't over-edit your photos," she says. "Lastly, OK is not good enough!"

Focusing on what you really like is also important, according to Bex. "I don't like bananas, for instance, so I'll never make a recipe with them. I'm the one who has to eat it at the end of the day!" [@stephanie_bex](#)

Bex's favourite Belgian restaurant Het Gebaar, Antwerp

"Last time I was here, I ate the best paella in my life. For dessert I would recommend the iconic Dame Blanche or one of the dessert plates." [hetgebaar.be](#)



Are you Belgium's next top food blogger?

We ask Bert Van der Jonckheyd, co-founder of the Belgian Food Blog Awards, for his insight

Firstly, what exactly are the Belgian Food Blog Awards?

"Jessica Lissens and I started the awards in 2017 as an initiative of our PR & Influencer marketing agency Parlez. Through our work, we saw the quality of food blogs increasing, and wanted to celebrate their excellence with an award show."

Who can enter?

"Any Belgian food blogger before the end of February 2019."

How will the winners be decided?

"The winners will be determined by a combination of public and jury votes – each accounting for 50% – because we want high-quality winners who are also popular."

Who are the judges?

"Our jury panel for 2019 is yet to be confirmed, though last year included chef Jeroen De Pauw, Weekend Knack journalist Eva Kestemont, Elle journalist Céline Pecheux and food photographer Luc Thys."

How do I vote?

"Public voting opens in March 2019, and can be done via the Belgian Food Blog Awards website."

What are your top tips for entrants?

"Authenticity and consistency in both your blog's images and content are key. It's also important to build your own identity, so your readers know what you stand for."

belgianfoodblogawards.be



The fast learner

As Cooked by Ginger
Laurence Bemelmans



Simplicity, seasonality and lots of veggies are the key ingredients in this blogger's recipes, who specialises in easy, affordable food that everyone can make

With a name like 'As Cooked by Ginger' (ascookedbyginger.com), you might expect 27-year-old hospital social worker Laurence Bemelmans, from Hasselt, to have a fondness for the spicy root – but on seeing her flame-red hair, all becomes clear. Winning the Best Overall Blog Award is no mean feat, especially when, by her own admission, she spent the first half of her life being "a terrible cook". "When I was a student I couldn't even make decent pasta!" she laughs. "It was only when I moved in with my boyfriend and finally had my own kitchen that I started coming up with recipes."

It was after Bemelmans started putting these recipes online that the idea of blogging came about. "I was posting pics of my food on Instagram, and receiving more and more questions," she explains. "It gave me the idea of starting a website. I figured that if something came of it then great. If not, then who cares? It's just some fun."

As will come as no surprise to anyone who has scalded Bemelmans tantalising Instagram feed, the hobby did amount to something – a profitable website. "The award





Clockwise from left Courgette fries and chicken satay; a local pie; a salmon and potato bake; cookie and brownie 'brookies'



gave me the push to make my blog into its own business to work on around my day job," says Bemelmans. "My followers rocketed, and I got lots of media attention. I would now love to produce a cookbook one day."

Bemelmans favours healthy food – although admits to also having a serious sweet tooth. "My cooking is simple, seasonal and features a lot of veggies, so is manageable financially," she explains. "Although my favourite food isn't healthy at all. It's a family recipe of tomatoes stuffed with mincemeat and served with fries. It's so delicious!"

So what's the secret to her blogging success? "You have to be very active and develop your own personal style that is immediately recognisable," says Bemelmans. "It's also all about trial and error. My website has a section called 'As Failed by Ginger' for recipes that didn't work, because I believe it's important to document mistakes, too."

@ascookedbyginger

Bemelmans' favourite Belgian restaurant 6 zinnen, Hasselt "Jan Wouters serves incredible gastronomic food at the very highest level. Making a reservation is important, as they book out months in advance." **restaurant6zinnen.be**

"I was a terrible cook when I was younger. It's only when I got my own kitchen that I started experimenting"





The health guru

Karola's Kitchen Karolien Olaerts



Healthy eating doesn't have to mean sacrificing taste. This blogger spills the beans on diets and doable recipes that are all about the veg

Don't click onto Karola's Kitchen (karolaskitchen.be) if you're

hungry. The seasonal recipes, coupled with beautiful photography, are designed to make you ravenous: stuffed tomatoes bursting with olives and aubergines; fragrant, herb-laden tabbouleh; blueberry-studded, baked ricotta.

Despite this, the winner of last year's Best Healthy and The People's Choice Award actually created her blog to keep waistlines trim. Olaerts, from Ghent, struggled with many diets while studying at university, before deciding to adopt her own approach to healthy eating. "I lost a lot of weight," she says. "Friends started to ask for my secret, so I started a Facebook page where I posted things for fun. I'd never written a blog before but it grew really quickly and I learnt everything I needed really fast."

Winning the award last year has opened up many doors for Olaerts – and allowed her to do the blog as a full-time job from this year. However, she says she's choosy regarding the brands she works with. "The story has to be truthful," she explains. "My recipes are all made with ingredients you can find in your local supermarket. I base them on a single vegetable and build up from there."

@karolas_kitchen

Olaerts' favourite Belgian restaurant *Roots, Ghent*

"This is an innovative, yet no-nonsense kitchen with a super cosy and relaxed atmosphere. The menu changes every few weeks, according to the season and chef." ***rootsgent.be***



Above A vegetable salad with cumin and pomegranate created for Karola's Kitchen; **Below** An apple and cinnamon muffin



PHOTOS: STUDIO WAUTERS, PICASA, KAROLIEN OLAERTS

FR **Gourmandise numérique**
À l'approche des **Belgian Food Blogger Awards**, nous avons rencontré les lauréats de l'an dernier



L'étoile montante

Prix du nouveau venu l'an dernier, Sven Ornelis, du blog Would Be Chef (<https://wouldbechef.be>), trouve son inspiration dans

des livres, émissions télévisées et voyages, notamment à sa seconde résidence à Barcelone. « La fraîcheur, les ingrédients de qualité et goûter ses préparations, voilà le secret. Je ne suis pas le meilleur cuisinier mais je suis créatif et prêt à me tromper : c'est comme ça qu'on invente des plats. »
@dewouldbechef



La pâtissière sur le tard

En matière de tentation numérique, on fait difficilement mieux que le blog www.hap-en-tap.be de Myriam Minne.

« Le chocolat belge est ce que je préfère. J'en utilise des tonnes dans mes recettes. Je me damnerais pour du chocolat ! » Lauréate du prix Instagram pâtisserie et confiserie, Minne s'inspire d'internet, de magazines et restaurants. « Les desserts, c'est mon dada. C'est très précis. Je blogue

régulièrement depuis six ans et j'ai accumulé une tonne d'ustensiles et de bols, au grand dam de mon mari ! » **@hap_en_tap**



Le héros des fins de soirées

Ayant travaillé des années en cuisine et en salle, Jonathan Scheerlinck, qui a remporté le prix Instagram boissons en 2017,

s'est rendu compte que sa véritable passion était la mixologie. Pourtant, ce prix l'a surpris. « Quand j'ai commencé sur Instagram il y a deux ans, je voulais juste partager ma passion. Aujourd'hui, des marques me proposent de collaborer. » Son conseil ? « Être cohérent, professionnel et régulier. Les belles photos attirent les likes et les clics. »
@bibleofdrinks



La gourmande infiltrée

« J'ai lancé un petit blog il y a cinq ans en prenant des photos pourries sur mon iPhone. Depuis, ma photographie a gagné en

qualité, explique Stephanie Bex, lauréate de la meilleure photographie culinaire sur Instagram l'an dernier. Dans le civil, je travaille sur un programme de cuisine belge, ce qui est complémentaire de mon blog car j'ai l'occasion de côtoyer des chefs étoilés

et de photographier des plats pour la télévision. J'ai la chance d'être en contact avec les experts ! »
@stephanie_bex



La surdouée

Remporter le prix du meilleur blog n'est pas une mince affaire, surtout lorsqu'on est à la fois

amoureuse du sucré et attentive à sa santé. Laurence Bemelmans, du blog « As Cooked by Ginger » (<https://ascookedbyginger.com>), sait allier les deux. Adeptes des légumes à outrance dans les plats tant sucrés que salés, elle explique par exemple que les courgettes sont polyvalentes. « On peut les utiliser dans presque tout. » **@ascookedbyginger**



La gourou du manger sain

Vainqueur 2017 gastronomie saine et prix du public, Karola's Kitchen (www.karolaskitchen.be) fait saliver sans faire enfler nos

poignées d'amour. Karolien Olaerts a pratiqué les régimes de tous poils, avant de se détourner des conseils des livres et magazines. « J'ai perdu beaucoup de poids et commencé à me sentir bien. Des amis m'ont demandé des recettes et j'ai créé une page Facebook. » **@karolas_kitchen**


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In aanloop op de Belgian Food Blogger Awards spreken we met de winnaars van vorig jaar



De opkomende superster

Sven Ornelis, Would Be Chef blogger (<https://wouldbechef.be>) en vorig jaar winnaar van de Best Newcomer award, wordt geïnspireerd door boeken, televisie en reizen, waaronder naar Barcelona, zijn tweede thuis. "Het draait om versheid, de beste ingrediënten en proeven tijdens het koken", zegt Sven. "Ik ben niet de beste chef, maar ik ben creatief en niet bang om vergissingen te maken. Op die manier worden nieuwe gerechten uitgevonden."

@dewouldbechef



De zoete banketbakker

Myriam Minne's www.hap-en-tap.be blog is net zo zoet als digitale verleiding kan zijn. "Ik ben dol op Belgische chocolade en ik gebruik het veel in mijn recepten. Ik doe alles voor chocolade", zegt Minne. De winnaar van de Best Baking & Sweets Instagram Award vindt inspiratie online en in tijdschriften en restaurants. "Ik maak het liefst desserts omdat er zoveel precisie bij komt

kijken", zegt ze. "Ik blog nu al zes jaar en heb ik die tijd heel veel bestek en kommen verzameld. Mijn man wordt er haast gek van!" @hap_en_tap



De mixende nachtbraker

Jonathan Scheerlinck, winnaar van de Best Drinks Instagram Award in 2017, besepte nadat hij in restaurants en keukens had gewerkt dat hij een passie had voor mixologie. Toch kwam de award als een verrassing. "Toen ik twee jaar geleden met Instagram begon, wilde ik gewoon mijn passie delen. En nu vragen merken of ik met wil samenwerken", zegt hij. Zijn advies? "Wees consistent, professioneel en werk hard. En met mooie foto's krijg je veel likes en clicks."

@bibleofdrinks



De foodie insider

"Vijf jaar geleden begon ik een blog, met slechte iPhone-foto's, maar sindsdien is mijn fotografie sterk verbeterd", vertelt Stephanie Bex, vorig jaar de winnaar van de Best Food Photography Instagram categorie. "Ik werk overdag voor een Belgisch kookprogramma wat goed is voor mijn blog omdat ik er met Michelin-chefs te maken heb en voor het programma foto's van eten maak.

Ik heb dus geluk dat ik toegang heb tot de experts!" @stephanie_bex



De begaafden

Het winnen van Best Overall Blog Award is niet niks, zeker niet voor een zoetekauw met een passie voor gezond eten. Maar Laurence Bemelmans, de blogger achter 'As Cooked by Ginger' (<https://ascookedbyginger.com>) is er toch in geslaagd. Laurence is dol op gezond eten met veel groenten, in zowel zoete als hartige gerechten. "Courgettes bijvoorbeeld zijn enorm veelzijdig, je kunt ze bijna met alles combineren." @ascookedbyginger



De gezondheidsgoeroe

Karola's Kitchen (www.karolaskitchen.be) won vorig jaar de Best Healthy en The People's Choice Award. Karolien Olaerts doet je met haar gerechten het water in de mond lopen, terwijl je er slank bij blijft. Ze worstelde zelf zo vaak met allerlei diëten, dat ze het advies van boeken en tijdschriften aan de kant schoof en zelf het heft in handen nam. "Pas daarna begon ik af te vallen en me lekker te voelen. Toen vrienden om recepten vroegen, ben ik een Facebookpagina begonnen", vertelt ze. @karolas_kitchen



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