

# Superior Motors lands on top 10 list

By Arthi Subramaniam  
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Superior Motors in Braddock has been named among the 10 best new restaurants in the country this year by Food & Wine magazine.

The list is not ranked, nor is it in alphabetical or any particular order. In fact, it is a list of the year's most captivating places to eat that feature exceptional cooking and techniques, have an expressive identity and are representative of their community and a way to spend a great night out. In addition to Superior Motors, the other nine honorees are: Maydan in Washington, D.C.; Fairfax in New York City; Reem's in Oakland, Calif.; Lasa in Los Angeles; Grand Cafe in

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Cedric Angeles

Food & Wine has picked Superior Motors in Braddock as one of the best new restaurants of 2018 in the U.S. Owner/chef Kevin Sousa, left center, opened the restaurant last July after five years of planning. About 35 percent of his staff are Braddock natives.

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Minneapolis; Voyager in Ferndale, Mich.; Junebaby in Seattle; Better Luck Tomorrow in Houston; and Kemuri Tatsu-Ya in Austin, Texas.

When owner and chef Kevin Sousa first heard the news that Superior Motors had made it to the restaurant of the year list, he said he felt emotional and summed up his feelings in five words: "Excited, proud, flattered, honored and thrilled to death."

"It was a long hard journey and we all put in a ton of work to get where we are," the restaurateur said. "So when I first got the call, I was crying."

It took Mr. Sousa five years to open the restaurant. A Kickstarter campaign raised \$310,225 from more than 2,000 backers in 33 days but it ran into a roadblock and out of money when the construction costs skyrocketed. So when the restaurant finally opened last July in the former site of a Chevrolet dealership and across from U.S. Steel's Edgar Thomson Works along the main drag, Braddock Avenue, it was to much anticipation. Superior Motors was the first sit-down restaurant that had opened in town in decades.

Jordana Rothman, restaurant editor for Food & Wine, who crisscrossed the country for more than six months and visited many a restaurant to compile the list, said Superior Motors was a perfect candidate with its "exceptional food, deep sense of commitment to its community, powerful narration and special voice in the region."

When she sat in the din-



Steve Mellon/Post-Gazette

Chef Kevin Sousa inside the Braddock space he converted into the Superior Motors restaurant.

Sousa could have staged it in a different way. It didn't have to face the steel mill and its cloudy gusts. "I really respected him for not doing that for it reminds you of where you are," she said.

Mr. Sousa employs 30 people and about 35 percent of them are Braddock natives. He provides a job training program, which he says "isn't so much strictly a culinary program as it is a prep course for a career in the food service industry." For instance, today the trainees will be visiting a distillery, and a trip to forage in the woods is planned in the coming weeks.

Ms. Rothman had been following Kevin Sousa for five years and was inspired by how he sowed the seeds to build Superior Motors. "It was a long and emotional process for him and I was moved by that," she said. "His story really stuck with me."

She believes that restaurants can be a powerful voice for social change and Mr. Sousa is a good example of that.

Mr. Sousa said neither he or his general manager, Chris Clark, had any idea that Ms. Rothman had visited their restaurant last November to experience it first hand. It was only later that he would learn that she had taken an Uber to Braddock and had three to four courses.

"It was amazing that we missed her but it only

sweeter," he said. "We served her what we would have served any other guest."

Food & Wine starts the restaurants-of-the-year process by looking at hundreds of restaurants in the U.S. and a complex calculus is involved to whittle down the number. "We call out nominations from people who we trust and we make visits to the restaurants. A lot of travel is involved," Ms. Rothman said. She, however, did not want to talk about how many visits she makes to each restaurant or if other restaurants in the Pittsburgh area were considered.

Mr. Sousa recognizes that the shout-out is a feather in his cap but said it is going to be business as usual at Superior Motors. As more spring produce is available, he intends to add nine or 10 new dishes and hopes to flip the whole menu next week. "I just don't have the words to describe what I'm feeling right now," he said. "We are not going to change our program, however."

So how is he and his team going to celebrate the honor today since the restaurant is typically closed on Tuesdays for its job training program? "I honestly don't know," he said. "But we will have a little something at the restaurant for the staff — a little hip hip hooray."

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