



Evening Standard

Sex claims will boost Ramsay's business, say London chefs

Benedict Moore-Bridger 27.11.08

ALLEGATIONS that Gordon Ramsay conducted a seven-year affair will boost bookings at his restaurants, according to leading London chefs.

Ramsay has refused to answer claims that he slept with "professional mistress" Sarah Symonds, the author of a handbook for women in adulterous relationships and a former lover of Jeffrey Archer.

Commentators have speculated that accusations that the pair had sex last week in the Marriott hotel adjoining Ramsay's Maze restaurant would damage his multi-million-pound empire. But colleagues have leapt to his defence, saying the 42-year-old's business will probably benefit in the long run from the publicity.

Jean-Christophe Ansanay-Alex, the two Michelin-starred chef who runs the L'Auberge de l'Ile in Lyons and recently opened a £2.2 million dining room in Old Brompton Road, said Ramsay would not be hurt by the headlines.

He said: "Ramsay makes money because of the brand. This will boost him. It is publicity. Gordon is still here. All his businesses are going very well already, and this may do him good." Mr Ansanay-Alex was speaking at **the Francais of the Year awards**, which **celebrate the most talented members of London's 300,000-strong French community.**

Sketch chef patron Pierre Gagnaire, whose three Michelin-starred restaurant in France has been voted the third best in the world, was chosen as the ex-pat community's favourite chef. He said of the Ramsay allegations: "It would never happen in France. In France, we respect privacy, but here it is a game. It is good for journalists, and good for him, but it is not the French way," adding: "I love my wife."

Other winners last night included designer Nicole Farhi, who won the Entrepreneur award, Arsene Wenger for sport, Connaught head chef Helene Darroze for Rising Star, and former Bond Girl Eva Green in the "Talent" category.

Ms Farhi said: "I am absolutely delighted. I love London - it is a wonderful place to live and work."

Organiser Laurent Feniou said almost 4,000 people had voted. He said: "In a period of economic uncertainty I am very happy to celebrate the dynamism and multiculturalism of London."