

French expats vote for their London crème de la crème

Sri Carmichael
Consumer Affairs Reporter

FROM ballet dancers to bosses of blue chip companies and red carpet fashion designers to Premier League footballers, the capital's 350,000 French expatriates are celebrating their role in London society.

For the third year they are holding the Français of the Year awards, marking the contribution of their high-fliers to city life.

There are prizes in only four categories this year – chef, sportsman, manager and artist.

Voters will choose an overall winner from differing talents such as Chelsea striker Nicolas Anelka, red carpet dressmaker Roland Mouret, ballet dancer Sylvie Guillem and chef Joël Robuchon for his two-Michelin-starred Covent Garden restaurant L'Atelier.

Businessmen competing include Xavier Rolet, who was appointed chief executive of the London Stock Exchange this year, and Geoffroy de la Bourdonnaye, chief executive of London store Liberty since the end of 2007. Other

names include Tidjane Thiam, the soon-to-be chief executive of insurer Prudential and first black boss of a FTSE 100 company, and Raymond Blanc, the proprietor of Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons, the two-Michelin-starred restaurant and hotel in Oxfordshire.

The Français of the Year awards were the brainchild of investment banker Laurent Feniou, 38, a father of two who has lived in London for 15 years.

He said: "The French population has grown substantially in the last two decades. It's the Eurostar generation – young French people who secure good jobs and want to stay because they can easily go home at the weekends. They come for a bit and stay because life in London is so good."

The online vote opens next Tuesday, Bastille Day,

to London-based former students of the grandes écoles, the prestigious French universities. The poll runs to September, with the winners announced at a ceremony in October.

'It's the Eurostar generation... young people who secure good jobs and stay because they can go home at weekends'

For more log on to:
francais-of-the-year.com

