

'EROSKI – BCC Onenak 2025 Awards'**EROSKI AND BASQUE CULINARY CENTER HONOUR ESTHER MERINO, LOLA PALACIO AND JON IÑAKI YURREBASO FOR THEIR COMMITMENT TO LOCAL PRODUCE, SUSTAINABILITY AND INNOVATION**

Elorrio, 7 November 2025. For the fifth consecutive year, [EROSKI](#) and [Basque Culinary Center](#) have presented the "EROSKI-BCC Onenak Awards", which recognise projects developed by members of the BCC alumni community who are redefining the way we understand food and gastronomy, and who stand out for their commitment to local produce, sustainability and innovation – values deeply shared by both institutions. This year's awards have gone to Esther Merino, a pioneer in the development of NoLo (non-alcoholic) beverages and artisanal fermentation techniques; Lola Palacio, co-founder, together with Iñaki Gómez, of Restaurante Alenda in Castiello de Selorio (Villaviciosa, Asturias); and Jon Iñaki Yurrebaso, chef and owner of Mendi Goikoa Bekoa, a restaurant and hotel in the village of Axpe (Bizkaia).

The awards ceremony took place today at Basque Culinary Center in Miramón (Donostia-San Sebastián), attended by Joxe Mari Aizega, General Director of the Basque Culinary Center; Vixente Atxa, President of its Board of Trustees and Rector of Mondragon Unibertsitatea; and, representing EROSKI, Rosa Carabel, CEO, and Asun Bastida, Director of Institutional Relations and Corporate Communications. The event also brought together representatives of the Basque Government and the Government of Navarre, as well as the Mayor of Donostia, Jon Insausti. More than a hundred professionals from the agri-food sector, institutions, associations and media enjoyed a distinctive culinary experience featuring dishes and beverages created by the three award-winners – a true showcase of innovation, flavour and sustainability.

During her address, Rosa Carabel highlighted the importance of balancing innovation and tradition: *"At EROSKI, we innovate without losing sight of our roots, working hand in hand with our local producers who share our vision: to preserve the gastronomic wealth of our regions, protect biodiversity and keep traditional practices alive as part of our identity. We believe that tradition is a source of inspiration for building the future. That is why today*

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we celebrate those who protect the best of our gastronomy while daring to imagine what lies ahead."

Joxe Mari Aizega underlined the continuity and impact of the project: *"For the fifth consecutive year, we present the EROSKI-BCC Onenak Awards, created to showcase the entrepreneurial spirit and extraordinary work being carried out by many of our graduates in areas such as local produce, sustainability, health and innovation. The success of these awards is the best proof of the young talent that has passed through our teaching kitchens. Developing this project together with EROSKI reflects a shared commitment to the new generations who will shape the future of gastronomy and food."*

Recognised Talents 2025

Esther Merino, a graduate in Gastronomy and Culinary Arts from the Basque Culinary Center, is a trailblazer in the creation of NoLo drinks and artisanal fermentation. After gaining experience at renowned restaurants such as Noma and Alchemist in Copenhagen, she founded BOWS, a gastronomic consultancy with its own distinctive methodology. A former lecturer at the Basque Culinary Center, she recently launched Sagarmut, a vermouth developed in collaboration with the Basque cider house Zapiain. Her work focuses on crafting healthy alternatives to industrial soft drinks using local, seasonal ingredients – driving a transformation towards more sustainable beverages that combine tradition, innovation and regional value creation.

Lola Palacio, a graduate of the Basque Culinary Center's Master's in Restaurant Innovation and Management, owns Restaurante Alenda with Iñaki Gómez in Castiello de Selorio, Villaviciosa (Asturias). After six years working alongside Ricardo Sotres at El Retiro de Pancar, she opened Alenda in 2023, and has been recognised by the Michelin Guide and has one Repsol Sun, securing its place among the most promising names in Asturian gastronomy. Her approach is rooted in sustainability and the zero-kilometre philosophy, featuring fresh fish from the Lastres fish market and vegetables from her own kitchen garden. With its warm atmosphere and personalised service, Alenda connects diners with the Asturian landscape, exemplifying how young entrepreneurs are leading the shift towards more sustainable, locally-grounded models.

Jon Iñaki Yurrebaso, a graduate in Culinary Sciences and Arts from the Basque Culinary Center, is chef-owner of Mendi Goikoa Bekoa, a restaurant and hotel in Axpe (Bizkaia). Named among the 100 Young Talents of Gastronomy, he trained with the Torres brothers and Dani García before launching his own project at just 26, opening Mendi Goikoa Bekoa

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in 2021, in the middle of the pandemic. His restaurant has been awarded one Repsol Sun. His culinary approach is rooted in reviving Basque gastronomic culture through the use of local, seasonal produce, distinguished by his mastery of the grill – showcasing his deep commitment to his territory and producers and contributing to the vitality of the region's economy.

Over its five editions, the EROSKI–BCC Onenak Awards have recognised graduates from the Basque Culinary Center's degree, master's and professional programmes who have launched innovative projects committed to sustainability, local sourcing and product excellence – three cornerstones of Basque Country gastronomy and of the food systems of the future. Both institutions actively promote these values through all their joint initiatives.

About EROSKI

EROSKI is one of the leading distribution groups in northern Spain – from Galicia to the Balearic Islands – with a market share of 12.7% in the region. The cooperative is the market leader in the Basque Country, Navarre and Galicia, and co-leader in the Balearic Islands. By the end of 2024, its work comprised 1,502 outlets, including supermarkets, hypermarkets, cash & carry and online stores, as well as petrol stations, sports shops and other non-food businesses. EROSKI has more than 6.4 million customer members and employs over 27,600 people, of whom nearly 9,000 are cooperative members.

About Basque Culinary Center

The Basque Culinary Center is a pioneering institution that integrates education, innovation, research and entrepreneurship within a unique ecosystem dedicated to advancing gastronomy – understood as the reasoned knowledge of what we eat and how we eat. Its mission is guided by values such as passion, innovation, excellence and social commitment.

Since its creation in Donostia–San Sebastián in 2011, the Center has developed a 360-degree vision of gastronomy through a range of high-impact initiatives. It currently comprises: The Faculty of Gastronomic Sciences, offering a degree in Gastronomy and 13 master's programmes. GOe – Gastronomy Open Ecosystem, where talent, knowledge and innovation converge to promote a tasty, healthy and sustainable food culture that contributes to a "delicious future." EDA Drinks & Wine Campus, an initiative to strengthen the wine and beverages sector through education, research, innovation and entrepreneurship.

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