



MEET THE CHEF

Ricky Saward

Location

Frankfurt, Germany

Philosophy

"Calm down, relax, and take time for yourself."

Influences

Nature, traveling to different countries, and eating in other restaurants.



Image by Marie Preaud

BIO

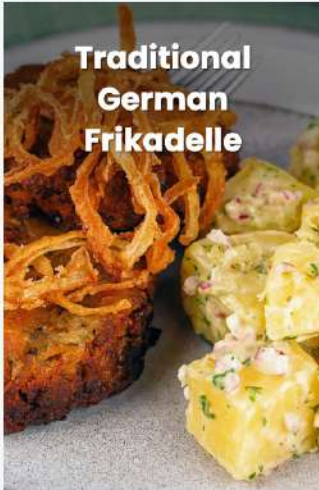
Ricky Saward became the first Michelin-starred vegan chef in history after a journey that took him around the world.

Born in the region of Münsterland, Saward started his culinary journey working in the kitchen of a retirement home. Liking the work well enough, 16-year-old Saward went on to complete an apprenticeship at a restaurant in his home village. Before long, he took his culinary talents international, working at the five-star Hilton Vienna Park in Vienna and at Glass Brasserie in Sydney, and at top restaurants across New Zealand. In 2013 after winning a spot in the

Young Chefs Exchange Program, he was a finalist for the San Pellegrino Young Chef Award in 2016.

In 2018, Saward left the Michelin-starred Villa Merton in Frankfurt to join Seven Swans, which was vegetarian at the time and had a Michelin star as well. Having retained the star there even after shifting to a purely plant-based menu, making history as the first vegan chef to achieve the coveted star.

RICKY SAWARD'S RECIPES



Traditional
German
Frikadelle



Kohlroutaden
with Mushroom
Sauce



Pulled Oumph!
BBQ Sandwich

EXPLORE
See more
recipes from
international,
renowned
chefs

[SEE ALL](#)

Q&A

Cindy Brzostowski talks to Chef Ricky about the elegance in simplicity, the importance of nature as inspiration, and the excitement he still feels tasting a new dish.

Collective Kitchen: When you joined Seven Swans, you knew you had to do something different to both stand out and retain the restaurant's Michelin star. What was your approach taking on that big responsibility?

Ricky Saward: In Germany, you call it, *ins kalte Wasser springen*—when you jump into the cold water. I never really thought about it. The Michelin star wasn't really a pressure for me, because I just said I'll try it out and if it's not working, no worries because I have nothing to lose. I never had a head chef position in my life. This was my first; it's still the first.

CK: You've become famous for your regional approach to cooking



Kohlroutaden with Mushroom Sauce served with simple homemade sauerkraut. | Viviana Blihoghe

CK: You've become famous for your regional approach to cooking, sourcing most of your ingredients from a single, local permaculture. How did you decide this is the direction you want to take?

Chef Ricky: At this time we decided to go vegan, I was more interested in the nature, and when I went out with the dog, I saw all the trees, all the varieties of berries, herbs... I can't go for a walk anymore without tasting something. It's a bit weird and crazy. There's so much stuff in front of the door. There was this way to say, "Okay, I'm just using the region because we have enough here, we have all the seasons." That made me go this direction to say just the region, this brutal regional cooking style I'm doing at the moment.

CK: In 2019, you became the first to win the Michelin Guide Germany's Sustainability Award (and again in 2020 and 2021). What did that recognition mean to you?

Chef Ricky: That was pretty funny. On this exact day, I had a pop-up at Cookies Cream in Berlin. I got a phone call two days before that I've got an invitation for the Michelin party in Berlin. I said, "Okay, maybe we come later after the menu." Then, the editor-in-chief who called me said, "No, it's very important that you come." Everybody was looking awesome, everybody had a suit on, and I was the only guy in jeans and a T-shirt because I had no idea what was happening.

It was surprising for me because I've been doing this for 12 years now, this style of cooking and philosophy, and it took a bit to get this award.

CK: Around this same time, you chose to move away from using any animal products at the restaurant. What compelled you to focus on purely plant-based cuisine?

Chef Ricky: It was really, really hard for us when you plan the menu, you start at 10 in the morning, and one hour before service one guy is saying he's vegan and we need to start again. That was so annoying for us and not doable, so we left a few things from the dishes and sent it out and they paid the same as the others and that was not fair.

Then, I started to write the menus nearly vegan, so I said 80 percent vegan and a few pieces of butter in sauces or something. Then, there came the idea because there was no vegan Michelin star worldwide, and I said to my investor, "Come on, let's try it out. I think it'll work because we're nearly 80 percent vegan anyways, so let's do it."

We started the vegan menu in the middle of 2019 and a few testers came. They called me a few months later and they said it was just fantastic, one of the best meals they've ever had. I felt like, okay, wow, so easy actually because they still love it and then the [Michelin] star came in March 2020.

SIGN UP FOR OUR NEWSLETTER

Enter Email Address

SIGN ME UP!

CK: What kind of experience are you trying to create with your food at Seven Swans?

Chef Ricky: The message is to bring people back to the roots—to say we don't need limes, we don't need spices, we don't need avocados. We don't use this overseas stuff because we have so much stuff in the region. Think about it, what you're buying, for the environment. I'm just eating what is growing at the moment outside, out the door. Take this season seriously.

CK: What motivates you to keep on innovating with your cuisine?

Chef Ricky: The variety of the vegetables. You can do everything out of vegetables. You can use the vegetables like a piece of meat, like fish. It's so interesting and people have no idea what to do about it. That's the wow effect with guests at my restaurant. That's pushing me to do more crazy stuff with fermentation, to get everything out of the simple product... We are just working with simple products everybody can buy for a very small amount in the supermarket because it's regional. It makes it interesting to show the people how tasteful self-grown vegetables can be.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cindy Brzostowski | Berlin



Cindy Brzostowski is a freelance writer and editor based in Berlin focusing on food, travel, and other lifestyle content.

MEET MORE CHEFS



Mokgadi Itsweng
Johannesburg, South Africa
The flavor queen



Ankan Linden
Stockholm, Sweden
The rock 'n' roll chef



Jason McNamara
Cape Town, South Africa
The kind butcher

MORE RECIPES

[SEE ALL](#) →

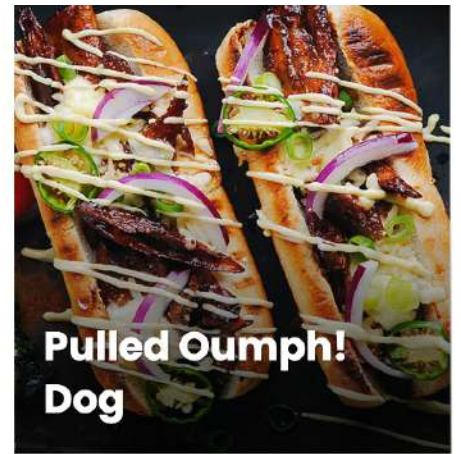




**Traditional
German Frikadelle**



**Kohlroutaden with
Mushroom Sauce**



**Pulled Oumph!
Dog**

[HOME](#)

[RECIPES](#)

[ABOUT](#)

[CHEFS](#)

[WATCH](#)

[SUBSCRIBE](#)

Collective
KITCHEN

**Top chefs. Plant-based recipes.
For the home cook.**

©LIVEKINDLY 2021. All Rights Reserved.
[Privacy & Cookie Policy.](#)