



2006 Report

French Sheep's Cheese lifts the cup at the World Cheese Awards

A French ewe's milk cheese from the region of Pays Basque in France has walked away with the coveted title of World Champion in the annual World Cheese Awards - the world's most prestigious international cheese event. According to organisers, standards were higher than ever this year, however the depth of flavour and sheer quality of the Brebis (sheep's) milk cheese won them over and was crowned outright winner.

It was a close run finish. 120 experts from around the world judged a total of 1542 cheeses during the morning of 14th June. By lunchtime, they had identified 135 Gold awards and early that same afternoon, the Supreme jury of 10 experts tasted each Gold winning cheese for a second time.

Twelve of the world's top cheeses were selected for the final stages and as each cheese was brought to the super jury sat, the cameras rolled and one by one, they were tasted for a third time before the final scores were given.

When the scores were totalled, two cheeses had tied and the judges agreed the winner, by the tiniest of margins should be the Ossau Iraty because three judges awarded it maximum points compared to the superb Gorgonzola, which gained maximum points from just one judge.

Made in the Basque area of France from pure sheep's milk by the Agour Fromagerie, the new World Champion is imported solely by Les Roots of Roots Delicatessen in High Wycombe (<http://www.frenchfoodfreaks.co.uk/>), a long time member of the Guild of Fine Food Retailers.

The judges loved the complex and well-rounded flavour and comments ranged from 'it's a privilege to eat' and 'a great combination of flavours: nuttiness, salt yet also slightly sweet' to 'it simply melts on the palate - a superb sheep's cheese.'

This year the World Cheese Awards were held at Taste of London in Regent's Park and entries were received from as far afield as the USA, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, in addition to every cheese making nation in mainland Europe.

When the judging was over and Taste of London opened to the public, over 40,000 consumers enjoyed the spectacle of the Awards and enjoyed tasting the competition cheeses - just to see if they agreed with the judges.