



PROVEN FINE FOOD

The 2008 Great Taste Award Gold winners are announced

"This competition has really come of age and year by year the standard of entries gets higher and higher. To win gold at the Great Taste Awards is a terrific achievement but to win a two star, or three star award means joining Britain's elite." **Charles Campion, Food Critic**

This morning, the much anticipated Gold winners of the Great Taste Awards were announced. The awards, which are **organised by the Guild of Fine Food** and often referred to as the **Oscars of the food industry** are celebrating their 15th anniversary this year. From 4753 products entered into the scheme this year, the vast majority of gold award winners were from smaller producers who source **local ingredients** and manufacture in small batches, generally by hand. A total of 1124 products were awarded gold this year, most receiving a one-star grading for their general excellence in taste, texture and flavour. 220 were given two stars and just 72 out of the 4753 entries were awarded the coveted three gold stars – a mark that the expert judges considered them **faultless**.

A Great Taste Award is the **authoritative, independent standard for Britain's fine food sector**: more and more consumers recognise the gold & black logo as the **benchmark for independently proven fine food**. However, winning a coveted Great Taste Award is much more than recognition for excellence; it is one of the most **powerful tools to help grow business** in the speciality food sector.

Bob Farrand of the Guild of Fine Food, said: *"These awards have been running for 15 years now and are **a recognised mark of excellence that consumers can trust and rely on**. The winning products have been through **a thorough judging process** and we are able to assure consumers that the Great Taste Award logo, which all award winners can use, signifies genuine,*

proven fine food. This is some supermarket premium marketing slogan that bears almost no relation to the quality of the food in the packet. Every food awarded a gold has been through three layers of judging and to achieve three stars, the foods have been tasted on at least six occasions by a total of 22 experts. The Great Taste Awards is the most accurate reflection of what is really happening with the finest food and drink available in fine food halls, delicatessens and farm shops throughout the UK.

The awards generate huge business for those who achieve gold standard. In just three weeks last September, the excitement created by the 2007 results increased sales to the tune of £640,000 in 524 Guild members' stores. **Over the past five years, they have generated over £2.6 million additional sales and 19,900 new listings.** Last year's Supreme Champion winner was a free-range pork pie from Walter Smith's butchers in Birmingham. Before Walter Smith's won the Supreme Champion award, pork pies made up less than 1% of their sales but they now represent over 10% and their pies are now sold through Selfridges.

The Great Taste Awards judging standards, devised and monitored by the Guild of Fine Food, are the most rigorous in the UK. Everything is **blind tasted by at least three teams of experts** and all the judges' comments are made available to producers. If no gold is awarded, they need to know how their foods could be improved.

The three-star Gold award winning foods were judged again last week for a fourth time by a Supreme Panel of 12 illustrious foodies, including **Mark Hix**, the chefs chef, **Alex James**, farmer, journalist, author and bass player with *Blur*, Food critic **Charles Campion**, *BBC Radio 2's Nigel Barden*, **Tom Parker Bowles** and national journalist **Fiona Sims**. The panel selected this year's major award winners, including the Supreme Champion 2008, which will be announced at Royal Garden Hotel in Kensington, London, on Monday 8th September.

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Notes to editor:

The judging process

Judging this year took place over 10 weeks in May, June and July in London, Hampshire, Belfast and at the Guild headquarters in Wincanton. No awards were confirmed at this stage, the judges simply decided which products should go through to the next round. The suppliers of potential Gold Award winners were contacted for more information about provenance of key ingredients, product availability and so on.

These entries were judged a second time early in July at the Pillar Hall at London's Olympia by 29

teams of experts before Gold award were confirmed along with the coveted one, two or three star status. All foods confirmed as achieving three star gold went forward to the final round in Wincanton on 19th July when a team of 12 leading chefs, food writers and retailers decided the regional and national winners along with the Supreme Champion 2008. These results remain a closely guarded secret until they are announced at a glittering awards ceremony at Kensington's Royal Garden Hotel on Monday 8th September 2008.

Testimonials for the Great Taste Awards:

'The GTA represent the gold standard of British food production. They are a sign of the highest quality, where taste is more important than the quick buck.'

Tom Parker Bowles

'It's no longer a food trade issue. The British public now demand proven standards. We are giving it!'

Bob Farrand

'The Great Taste Awards is the best benchmark of quality in food today - look for their stamp when you shop'

Matthew Drennan, Editor, Delicious Magazine

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