



PROVEN FINE FOOD

**The tension rises ahead of the announcement of the 2008 Supreme Champion:
Alex James, Mark Hix and Charles Campion battle it out**

'The Great Taste Awards is the food producer's F.A. Cup. An all-comers extravaganza. The mighty versus the up and coming, traditional classics and the innovative head to head in an almighty penalty shoot – out.'

Alex James, Farmer, Author, Journalist and Bass player with *Blur*



Alex James, Mark Hix, Tom Parker-Bowles, Fiona Sims and Charles Campion all battled it out at a **top secret** judges meeting in Dorset to decide who will be the **Supreme Champion** of the coveted Great Taste Awards 2008. They were joined by the great and good of the food industry including **Trading Director for Fortnum & Mason** Simon Burdess, **Glynn Christian**, author of *How to Cook without ingredients* and *BBC Radio 2's Nigel Barden* who chaired the panel. The debate over who would be this year's overall champion was the most heated to date with each

of the **12 illustrious foodies**, 'championing' a three-star Gold award-winning food of their choice for the top prize. The Supreme Champion 2008 along with the major trophy winners will be announced at a glittering ceremony in London on **Monday 8th September**.

Renowned **Chef Mark Hix commented**, *'Isn't it great that small artisan producers can now get their wares into the general public's larders and fridges...once they have gotten past the great taste panel that is!'*

The awards generate huge business for those who achieve gold standard. 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. They now represent over 10% and their pies are sold through Selfridges. Bob Farrand, National Director 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.**"*

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Notes to editor:

Background on the Great Taste Awards:

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.

The judging process

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.

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.

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