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## Tastiest Soft Fruit in Kent

The Taste of Kent Awards 2017, organised by Produced in Kent, has officially begun. Kick-starting the awards, the Garden of England Champion tastiest soft fruit and cherry category was judged at the National Cherry and Soft Fruit Show at the Kent Show, Friday 8 July.

Sponsored for the very first time by the Kent County Agricultural Society, the category highlights Kent's tastiest soft fruits. Lucy Hegarty, Show Manager from the Kent County Agricultural Society said "We are proud to be supporting this award. It's the perfect fit for us as it's judged at the Kent County Show. As a charity we continue to engage with the rural community and support them in a variety of ways throughout the year". Judged on taste alone by both professionals from the industry and members of the public the winning varieties and growers for this year are:

Cherries – Class 60 winner A.C. Hulme & Son, Nr Canterbury with their Georgia variety

Strawberries – Class 70 winner Robert Boucher & Son, Sittingbourne with their Jubilee variety

Raspberries – Class 80 winner Total Berry (trial site) grown at Runwood Green Farm, Langley, Maidstone with their Paragon variety. This new variety has been bred for its flavour and will be available in the Autumn

Paul Kelsey Chairman of the National Cherry and Soft Fruit show said "The National Cherry and Soft Fruit Show are once again proud to be involved with Produced in Kent. Although the NCSFS attracts competitors from all over the UK this class is solely for fruit grown in Kent and I am delighted that the number of entries continues to grow. This year we have three new worthy winners and I send them many congratulations and would encourage other Kent growers to have a go next year!"

Stephanie Durling at Produced in Kent comments: "We would like to congratulate all of this year's winners. Each year the Garden of England Champion Soft Fruit awards

launches the Taste of Kent Awards with the most delicious range of soft fruit and cherries. All of the fruit looked fantastic on display and tasted even better. Kent is renowned for producing excellent fruit and these awards aim to showcase the great tastes and flavours of Kent.

The Taste of Kent Awards has been running since 2004 and are recognised as the outstanding annual showcase for Kent food and drink producers. The awards promote a wide range of categories and are open to all food and drink businesses across Kent. Public voting in the campaign begins each year in September until early January, which sees thousands of members of the public voting for their favourites. The awards demonstrate that more and more consumers support local businesses buying Kent products and produce. If Kent residents spend just 10% of their weekly shopping budget buying something local from Kent, which is easily achievable, this can contribute in excess of £175M to the Kent economy. KEEP IT KENTISH!

The winning growers will formally receive their award at the Taste of Kent Awards Gala dinner, which takes place in March 2017.

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