



Press Release: 15 September 2016

Public voting opens today for the Taste of Kent Awards 2017

Produced in Kent's prestigious Taste of Kent Awards 2017 are now in full swing. Public voting was officially opened last night (Wednesday 14 September) at a launch reception at Allington Castle, Kent.

The reception, sponsored by Moor's Juice from Teynham near Sittingbourne, brought together previous winners, award sponsors and Kent foodies to celebrate the launch of the awards, now in their thirteenth year. Guests were given the opportunity to tour the castle, followed by canapés and a drinks reception.

Stephanie Durling of Produced in Kent welcomed guests to Allington Castle, which is owned by Sir Robert Worcester. During the evening talks were given by some of the winners from the 2016 awards, on how winning a Taste of Kent Award has helped to benefit and transform their businesses.

The Taste of Kent Awards, organised by Produced in Kent, aims to showcase Kent's finest food and drink products and provides the general public with a unique opportunity to have their say and vote for their favourite producers, retailers, restaurants, pub/bistro and farmers' markets. To cast your vote, simply visit www.tasteofkentawards.co.uk before voting closes on 3rd January 2017 at midday.

This year for the first time, when you vote in the Taste of Kent Awards, you will be entered into a draw to win a pair of Eurostar Business Premier return tickets from one of Eurostar's Kent or London stations, to Paris, Brussels or Lille. The winners will enjoy a three course meal, including wine and champagne, created by Michelin starred chef Raymond Blanc OBE, as they relax in a first class seat.

Erica Dennett a partner at Cripps, the awards Main sponsor, comments: "Cripps is proud to be the main sponsor of the Taste of Kent Awards for the sixth consecutive year. Kent has a fantastic and flourishing food and drink industry and we're delighted to be able to support successful local businesses. We look forward to sampling the entries for 2017!"

Stephanie Durling at Produced in Kent, comments: "Last night was a fantastic way to start the launch of the Taste of Kent Awards 2017. It was great to hear how TOKA has benefitted Kent businesses and we are encouraging everyone to take part and vote. If you have had a good meal

in a pub or restaurant or enjoyed some delicious Kentish produce, then show your appreciation and cast your vote.

Stephanie continues: Each year more people get involved in the voting, with Kent foodies demonstrating great support for Kent's local products and its great choice of places to eat. For the outstanding businesses that win an award, it is an acknowledgement of their status as one of the top food and drink businesses in the county, and a stamp of approval from consumers in Kent."

Following the all-important initial public vote, three finalists in each category will go forward to be judged by mystery shoppers, mystery diners or an expert judging panel. The juice producers will be judged by sponsor AC Goatham & Son which includes a site visit as well as a tasting panel. Kent's wine, beer and cider or perry are then judged by a separate panel of experts and sponsors with Kent's producers and manufacturers being invited to submit their products to a panel of experts in the self-nominating category the *Kent Food Product Classes*. Full details are available on www.tasteofkentawards.co.uk

In addition to the online voting at www.tasteofkentawards.co.uk, voters can pick up a voting form from their nearest farmers' market or direct from Produced in Kent, tel. 01732 853170.

The awards presentation dinner will take place on Thursday 16th March 2017 at the Kent Event Centre at the Kent Showground, Detling. If anyone wishes to buy tickets for the awards dinner please contact Produced in Kent, as it is open to everyone.

The Taste of Kent Awards main sponsor is Cripps LLP, with media support from insideKENT.

This year's categories open for public voting, are as follows:

Kent Butcher's Shop of the Year, sponsored by Stephens

A retailer selling a good range of Kent produced meat. They will be required to provide evidence of traceability to substantiate this for judging.

Kent Beer of the year, sponsored by Rix & Kay Solicitors

Beer produced predominantly from hops grown in Kent at a brewery based in Kent.

Kent Wine of the Year, sponsored by Eurostar

Wine produced from grapes predominantly grown in Kent, Sussex, Essex or Surrey at a winery based in Kent.

Kent Cider or Perry of the Year, sponsored by Wilkins Kennedy FKC

Cider or Perry made from apples or pears predominantly grown in Kent at a business based in Kent.

Kent Juice Producer of the Year, sponsored by AC Goatham & Son

Producer of fruit juice made from made from fruit predominantly grown in Kent at a business based in Kent.

Kent Local Food Retailer of the Year, sponsored by Opies

The retailer must sell a wide range of Kent produce/products. They will be required to provide details of the suppliers and product range for judging.

Kent Fishmonger of the Year, sponsored by The University of Kent

A retailer selling a good range of Kent caught fish. They will be required to provide evidence of traceability to substantiate this for judging.

Kent Food Producer of the Year, sponsored by Shopper Anonymous

A business that makes a food product using ingredients sourced from Kent where possible.

Kent Restaurant of the Year, sponsored by Thomson, Snell & Passmore

A formal dining experience. The restaurant will be actively using Kent produce where and when seasonally available and demonstrate this commitment in menus and marketing.

Kent Pub or Bistro of the Year, sponsored by Page & Wells

An informal dining experience in a licensed premises. The pub or bistro-style eatery will be actively serving Kent food and drink when seasonally available and demonstrate this commitment in menus & marketing.

Kent Farmers' Market of the Year, sponsored by Hadlow College

The market must be a current member of the Kent Farmers' Market Association (KFMA).

Other awards, not open for public voting, are:

Kent Food Product Classes, sponsored by Shepherd Neame

Producers can enter their own products into a range of 5 classes. The product must be available in retailers and/or caterers made from Kent primary produce that has undergone a value added process over and above just being re-packaged.

Best Kent Food Product of the Year, sponsored by HSBC

A product selected by the judging panel as the overall winner from all the entries in the Kent Food Product Classes.

Kent Countryside Award, sponsored by Kent Downs and High Weald AONBs

This stand-alone award gives farmers, rural businesses using local produce and food and drink producers, the opportunity to enter their businesses directly into the competition visit www.tasteofkentawards.co.uk/awards/kent-food-farming-landscape-award/ for more information.

Garden of England Champions – Cherry & Soft Fruit, sponsored by The Kent County Agricultural Society

Three categories: Cherry, Strawberries and Raspberries

Judged on taste by both professionals from the industry and members of the public at the Kent County Show, July 2016, the winners are:

Cherries – Georgia variety by A.C. Hulme & Son, Nr Canterbury

Strawberries – Jubilee variety by Robert Boucher & Son, Sittingbourne

Raspberries – Paragon variety by Total Berry, grown at Runwood Green Farm, Langley, Maidstone.
This new variety has been bred for its flavour and will be available in the Autumn.

Garden of England Champions – Top Fruit, sponsored by BTF Partnership

The winners of Produced in Kent's Taste of Kent Awards 2017 Garden of England Champion Top Fruit Category, sponsored by BTF Partnership, will be announced in October at the National Fruit Show at Kent County Show Ground.

All Kentish apples & pears entered into the competitions will automatically be entered into the Taste of Kent Awards Top Fruit categories and will be taste tested and announced at the show.

Entries for the classes considered for this award are managed by the National Fruit Show.

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Notes:

Pictures from the launch event are available on request.

The Taste of Kent Awards is now in its thirteenth year and is recognised as the outstanding annual showcase of Kent food and drink. The Awards promote a wide range of categories and are open to all food and drink businesses across Kent. The campaign begins each year with these soft fruit winners and continues with the commencement of public voting between September and early January.

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