
Aldeburgh cheese retailer shortlisted in Shop of the Year 2018

The Guild of Fine Food's annual Shop of the Year awards, an accreditation scheme which recognises and promotes excellence in independent retail, has announced its shortlist for 2018. Among the 42 independent retail outlets named, Aldeburgh-based Slate, a specialist cheese retailer, is in the running for Best Specialist Cheese Shop in the UK.

Having had a written entry reviewed by a panel of respected industry experts, Slate, which only opened in 2017, will now undergo two further rounds of judging this summer; an announced visit from one of the judges and a mystery shop by Shopper's Anonymous.

Previously forming part of the Great Taste accreditation scheme, Shop of the Year has evolved to apply an even more rigorous and robust judging process dedicated solely to retail. Celebrating delis, farm shops, cheesemongers and more, Shop of the Year offers independent retailers a chance to achieve a stamp of approval with real integrity, much like Great Taste does for food and drink products.

From overall shopping experience and financial performance to staff training opportunities and environmental initiatives, the panel of judges, which includes Edward Berry of The Flying Fork, Stuart Gates, who has worked for both Harrods and Fortnum & Mason, award-winning retailer Tracey Colley and Georgina Mason from Gonalston Farm Shop, will rate, score and feedback on every aspect of the shops before agreeing on an overall category winner.

On Thursday 20 September, Shop of the Year 2018 will reach an exciting finale when the world of fine food gathers at No. 42 Southwark Street, the Guild of Fine Food's London base, to find out the winners of Best Delicatessen; Best Farm Shop or Garden Centre with Food Hall; Best Grocer, Village or Community Shop; and Best Specialist Cheese Shop.

Facts and figures about Shop of the Year 2018:

- Shop of the Year recognises and promotes excellence in independent retail
- Previously forming part of the Great Taste accreditation scheme, Shop of the Year is now a stand-alone accreditation, offering independent retailers a recognised stamp of approval from industry experts
- 150 independent retail outlets entered the first Shop of the Year and 42 were named in the shortlist
- Shop of the Year is judged by a panel of experts with a proven track record of success in independent retail
- There are four categories:
 - Best Delicatessen – 13 shortlisted
 - Best Farm Shop or Garden Centre with Food Hall – 13 shortlisted
 - Best Grocer, Village or Community Shop – 7 shortlisted
 - Best Specialist Cheese Shop – 9 shortlisted