

Golden Fork from the Midlands announced

Nordic know-how hooks Golden Fork, as Smoked Mackerel shines in Great Taste

Celebrating the very best in food and drink, Great Taste, the world's most coveted food awards, has reached its grand finale for 2017. The **Great Taste Golden Fork** for the best food or drink from the **Midlands** was presented to **Macneil's Smokehouse** from Rushock, near Droitwich, for its "moist, juicy and sweet" **Smoked Mackerel**, a "perfectly executed" fillet of fish smoked over beechwood in a Norwegian smoker, which was also listed in this year's **Top 50 Foods**.

Out of 12,366 products entered into Great Taste 2017, the **Smoked Mackerel**, which was inspired by producer, Tony Macneil's time working as a chef in Norway, was celebrated as the best tasting product in its region at the Great Taste Golden Fork Award Dinner held on Monday 4 September at the InterContinental London Park Lane Hotel, where over 350 guests from the world of fine food gathered to hear the results of many months of rigorous judging.

Contact: Tony Macneil, 01299 253764, tony@macneilssmokehouse.co.uk

The Golden Fork from the **Midlands** was sponsored by **Aga Rangemaster** and also nominated this year was Great Taste 3-star winning **Blue Stilton** by Nottingham-based **Cropwell Bishop**, which was also listed in this year's Top 50 Foods, and **Medium Cider** from Dorstone-based **Pips Cider**.

What is Great Taste?

Great Taste, founded in 1994 and organised by The Guild of Fine Food, has judged over 122,000 products in the last 23 years; each one has been blind-tasted by a team of judges who are dedicated to finding the most exquisite tasting food and drink regardless of branding or packaging. The panel of judges this year included; chef, food writer and author, Gill Meller, MasterChef judge and restaurant critic, Charles Champion, author and Zoe's Ghana Kitchen chef, Zoe Adjonyoh, baker, Tom Herbert, and food writer and baking columnist, Martha Collison, as well as food buyers from Fortnum & Mason, Selfridges, and Harvey Nichols. These esteemed palates have together tasted and re-judged the 3-star winners to finally agree on the 2017 Top 50 Foods, the Golden Fork Trophy winners and the Great Taste 2017 Supreme Champion.

Facts and figures about Great Taste 2017:

- Great Taste is widely acknowledged as the most respected food accreditation scheme for artisan and speciality food producers.
- A record breaking 12,366 different products were entered in 2017.
- Over 500 of the most demanding palates, belonging to food critics, chefs, restaurateurs, cooks, producers and a host of food writers and journalists blind taste each product
- Judging took place across the UK at the following locations:
 - Guild HQ in Gillingham, Dorset, as well several other Dorset venues.
 - The Guild of Fine Food's newly opened second home, No. 42 Southwark Street, London, as well as other London venues.

- Llandrillo College, Nr Colwyn Bay, as part of this year's Great Taste Roadshow, seeing Great Taste visit North Wales for the very first time.
- **3,171 awarded 1-star**
- **1,011 awarded 2-star**
- **165 awarded 3-star**

As the judges searched for the stars of 2017, waste was kept to a minimum, with unused products being donated to local food banks and hampers made up of excess products for local businesses to raffle in aid of charities. The Guild of Fine Food also donates surplus computer equipment, used to record the judges' comments, to community-based projects across the UK, which are then refurbished and used to facilitate after school clubs and many other initiatives designed to support underprivileged families.

What are Great Taste judges looking for?

Above all they are looking for **truly great taste**. Yes, they take into account texture, appearance and of course quality ingredients; they like a good aroma, a decent bite to a sausage, a smooth lemon curd, crunchy rich pastry, but everything comes back to the taste. Is it really, truly great?

How do they work?

Each team of four judges blind-tastes around 25 products per session, discussing each product as a coordinating food writer transcribes their comments directly onto the Great Taste website which producers access after judging is completed. Over the years, numerous food businesses, start-ups and well established producers have been advised how to modify their foods and have subsequently gone on to achieve Great Taste stars. Food or drink that is deemed worthy of Great Taste stars is also tasted by a team of arbitrators, who taste, confer and agree on the final award given. If judges feel that a product needs some adjustment, and therefore not likely to receive an award, the food or drink gets a second chance on a referral table, where another team, blind-tastes and deliberates. For a Great Taste 3-star award, the vast majority in the room – which can be as many as 30-40 experts – must agree that the food or drink delivers that indescribable 'wow' factor.

What should consumers look for?

The black and gold logo. The Great Taste seal is their guarantee a product has been through a rigorous and independent judging process. It's not about smart packaging or clever marketing – it's all about taste.

??? EXQUISITE. WOW! TASTE THAT ?? OUTSTANDING ? SIMPLY DELICIOUS

Images are available to view in the [press room](#) on the Guild of Fine Food website and high resolution images are available from amy@freshlygroundpr.co.uk.

For further information, please contact any of the following:

Amy Brice at Freshly Ground PR on +44 (0) 7717 893123 or at amy@freshlygroundpr.co.uk.



Guild of Fine Food

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Tortie Farrand at the Guild of Fine Food on +44 (0) 1747 825200 or at tortie.farrand@gff.co.uk.

www.gff.co.uk

www.greatasteawards.co.uk

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