
Shop of the Year 2019 winners announced

On Monday 11 March, the Guild of Fine Food crowned the UK's best independent retailers, as Shop of the Year 2019 reached its exciting finale. Established to recognise and promote excellence in independent retail, the rigorously judged accreditation scheme presented seven trophies at Fodder Farm Shop and Café in Harrogate, where the world of fine food gathered to find out the winners of each category.

Following two rounds of judging, which included an announced visit from one of the expert judges and a mystery shop by customer experience specialists, Insight6, Leamington Spa-based Aubrey Allen won the Delicatessen & Grocer category, Sheridans Cheesemongers in Dublin scooped best Specialist Cheese Shop and Perthshire-based The House of Bruar was named winner of the Food Hall award. Representing the North of England, Farmer Copleys in Pontefract took top honours in the Farm Shop category, while the trophy for Specialist Food or Drink Shop went to Gateshead-based Block & Bottle.

Visiting 45 finalists on the hunt for this year's independent retail stars, the panel of judges found excellence in every corner of the UK before giving out the gongs. The winners ranged from community-focused family businesses like Aubrey Allen, which was established in 1933 and shone through with its "balanced retail flow, where shoppers can stock up for a dinner party, while also grabbing something for lunch", to pioneers of Irish cheese, Sheridans Cheesemongers, described as "key to the growth in farmhouse cheesemaking in Ireland." Applauded by the judges for "bringing really good quality cheese to a wider audience", Sheridans received high praise on everything from its biodegradable packaging and materials to its work with key suppliers to create unique cheeses.

Stocking a wide range of meat and vegetables reared and grown on the family-run farm, alongside locally sourced produce and pies, baked goods and ready meals made on site, Farmer Copleys was praised for staying "true to its roots, while engaging with the local community and hosting an 'exciting' line up of seasonal events", while The House of Bruar was commended for its "delightful, attentive and knowledgeable staff", as well as its "impressive smoked salmon display, exemplary butchery skills and range of successful brands". Opened in 2017, Block & Bottle caught the judges' attention with an impressive range of local, national and international craft beer and meat from within a 60-mile radius. The "concept, execution and energy" of owners Katie and Stephen came in for special mention, with judges dubbing them an "inspirational and entrepreneurial couple with spirit and compassion".

From overall shopping experience and financial performance to staff training opportunities and environmental initiatives in place, the panel of judges, which includes Edward Berry of The Flying Fork, Stuart Gates, former managing director at Fortnum & Mason and senior buyer at Harrods, award-winning retailer Tracey Colley and food writer, Patrick McGuigan, rated, scored and provided feedback on every aspect of the shops before agreeing on an overall category winner.

Shop of the Year 2020 is now open for entry at gff.co.uk/awards/shop-of-the-year, with independent retailers across the UK invited to submit a written submission for the following categories; Delicatessen & Grocer; Specialist Cheese Shop; Farm Shop (farmer owned); Food Hall; Specialist Food or Drink Shop.



Shop of the Year 2019 winners and runners up

Delicatessen & Grocer sponsored by **The Tracklement Company**

Aubrey Allen, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire

Runners up:

The Mainstreet Trading Company, Roxburghshire, Scotland

Eat 17, Hammersmith, London

Farm Shop (farmer owned) sponsored by **Peter's Yard**

Farmer Copleys, Pontefract, West Yorkshire

Runners up:

Blacker Hall Farm Shop, Wakefield, West Yorkshire

Ardross Farm Shop, Elie, Scotland

Food Hall sponsored by **Le Gruyère AOP**

The House of Bruar, Perthshire, Scotland

Runner up:

Macknade Fine Foods, Faversham, Kent

Specialist Cheese Shop sponsored by **Le Gruyère AOP**



Sheridans Cheesemongers, Dublin, Ireland

Runner up:

George & Joseph Cheesemongers, Leeds, West Yorkshire

Specialist Food or Drink Shop sponsored by **Le Gruyère AOP**

Block & Bottle, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear

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Runners up:

The Hungry Guest, Petworth, West Sussex

The Seasons Forest Row, Forest Row, East Sussex

Special Shop of the Year Awards

Newcomer Award sponsored by **Fine Food Digest**

Slate, Southwold, Suffolk

Innovation Award sponsored by **Le Gruyère AOP**

Eat 17, Hammersmith, London