
Time-honoured tradition takes top honours, as Great Taste stars go to Ireland's coastline, pastures and hedgerows

Following 14 weeks of judging, the results of the world's most trusted food and drink awards, Great Taste, have been released, with many producers in Ireland now celebrating. Out of a record breaking 12,777 entries from 106 different countries, 42% were awarded a highly prized Great Taste accolade and a remarkable 396 are based in Ireland.

Among the Great Taste 3-star winners from Ireland are a number of traditional products that make the most of what the land and sea provides, including; the “plump, glossy, soft and remarkably sweet” Carlingford Oysters from Carlingford Oyster Co, “a real taste of the sea” that led one judge to say, “it is hard to imagine better tasting, better looking oysters”; a “simple but really well made” Gooseberry Spread from Crossogue Preserves in Thurles, Co. Tipperary, praised for having “notes from the flesh, skins and pips all present” and ending in style with a “lovely hedgerow finish”; and Traditional Ham on the Bone from James Whelan Butchers in Clonmel, Co. Tipperary, a “whopper of a ham with a light piggy aroma” and “oozing pig flavour”, with the judges agreeing that this “was obviously a happy pig.”

While these producers enjoy their success and begin displaying the unmistakable gold and black Great Taste logo, with 1-, 2- or 3- stars, on their award-winning products, they will wait with much anticipation to see if they also scoop the top awards for their region. These final honours, including the Great Taste 2020 Supreme Champion, will be announced at the virtual Great Taste Golden Fork awards event, set to take place in October.

Recognised as a stamp of excellence among consumers and retailers alike, Great Taste, organised by the Guild of Fine Food, values taste above all else, with no regard for branding or packaging. Whether it is cake, coffee, kippers or kombucha being judged, all products are removed from their packaging before being tasted. The judges then savour, confer and re-taste to decide which products are worthy of a 1-, 2- or 3-star award.

This year's winners have been found through a combination of remote judging and socially distanced judging sessions, after the lockdown began just one week into the schedule. This necessitated a swift and comprehensive reinvention of the Great Taste process to ensure that robust judging standards were maintained and the quality of feedback was not compromised, all in time to provide a much-needed boost for food and drink producers during the all-important Christmas period.

The panel of judges included; cook, writer and champion of sustainable food, Melissa Hemsley, cook, writer, stylist and voice of modern vegetarian cooking, Anna Jones, celebrated Spanish chef, José Pizarro, Kavi Thakrar from Dishoom, food writer and cook, Xanthe Clay, and baker and author, Martha Collison, as well as food buyers from Selfridges, Fortnum & Mason and Waitrose. These esteemed palates have together tasted and re-judged the 3-star winners to finally agree on the Golden Fork Trophy winners and the Great Taste 2020 Supreme Champion.

Details of this year's winners can be found at www.greatasteawards.co.uk and a wide range of award winning products are available to buy in delis, farm shops and independent retail outlets across the country.

Facts and figures about Great Taste 2020:

- Great Taste is widely acknowledged as the most respected food accreditation scheme for artisan and speciality food producers
- A record breaking 12,777 different products were entered in 2020
- Entries were sent in from 106 different countries, including Estonia, Greece, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Madagascar, the Philippines, Portugal, Singapore, Spain, Switzerland, the USA and Vietnam
- 144 judges took part this year. Less than usual, due to the pandemic and to ensure social distancing in both locations. However, the same number of judging layers were applied, to maintain the rigorous and robust process. Judges included the most demanding palates, belonging to food critics, chefs, restaurateurs, retail buyers, cooks, producers and a host of food writers, journalists and social media influencers
- Judging took place over a total of 14 weeks. Having begun as planned in March 2020, the process was then halted due to COVID-19. Judging resumed in early May, when remote judging was able to take place in judges' homes, before Great Taste returned to the judging rooms in both Dorset and London during July
- Judging took place at the following locations:
 - Guild HQ in Gillingham, Dorset, as well several other Dorset venues
 - The Guild of Fine Food's London home, No. 42 Southwark Street, SE1
 - The homes of regular judges, as Great Taste continued during lockdown
- **3,818 awarded 1-star**
- **1,294 awarded 2-star**
- **205 awarded 3-star**

As the judges searched for the stars of 2020, 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. No plastic plates or cutlery were used during the judging rounds, reducing plastic waste by almost 100%. 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.

A full list of winners is available from sam@freshlygroundpr.co.uk.

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

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