Great Taste Brings National Food Judges To Belfast

Tuesday 13 May, 2014

Great Taste, the world's largest and most respected food and drink awards, is to hold three days of judging in Belfast on June 3rd, 4th and 5th, thanks to the welcome support of Invest Northern Ireland, the food and drink development body.

"We see the judging sessions as a tremendous opportunity to develop further our longstanding support for Great Taste and to showcase the quality, variety and originality of food and drink being created by companies, both large and small, and particularly fast growing enterprises, here in Northern Ireland," said Nigel Hardy, Head of Global Food Marketing at Invest Northern Ireland.

For the three days of judging, highly respected food experts including Charles Campion (acclaimed food critic and judge), Nigel Barden (of BBC Radio 2 Foodie Thursday), Xanthe Clay (The Telegraph) and Jane Curran (Woman & Home) will be joined by influential buyers from Harrods, Selfridges and renowned London cheese emporium Paxton & Whitfield.

"This is a record-breaking year for Great Taste with 10,000 entries. Of these, Northern Ireland producers have entered a record 716 products from 125 companies and we are thrilled that we will be judging many of these at the Stormont Hotel with the help and support of Invest Northern Ireland," explained John Farrand, MD of The Guild of Fine Food, organisers of Great Taste.

Although Great Taste judges will be spending hours blind-tasting a whole host of different food and drink entries, Invest Northern Ireland has also arranged to take the judges on several evening food trips including a Brewers' tour, Cheesemakers' tour and a Tea Tasting. There are also plans to visit the salt chambers of Hannan Meats in Moira, and the oldest independent brewery Hilden where judges will be able to sample beer and cider from microbrewers and cider makers.

Great Taste is also grateful for the support of wholesaler and distributer Get Fresh in enabling products to be delivered safely for judging.

Since 1994 Great Taste has been organised by the Guild of Fine Food, and over 80,000 products have been judged by hundreds of food experts.

Over the last 20 years, Great Taste has discovered and celebrated the very best fine food and drink. Chefs, buyers, fine food retailers, restaurateurs, food critics and writers, blind-taste and provide valuable feedback to producers who covet the gold and black Great Taste logo which is increasingly recognised by consumers as a sign of excellence.

The announcement of the Supreme Champion 2014, sponsored by Harrods, will be made on the 8th September.

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What do Great Taste judges look for?

They look for great texture and appearance. They judge the quality of ingredients and how well the maker has put the food or drink together. But above all, they look for truly great taste. Working in small teams, experts taste 20 foods in each sitting, 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 star status. Any food that a judging team believes is worthy of a star is judged by at least two further teams. Only when there is a consensus will a star be awarded. For 3-stars, judges attending the session, which can be as many as 30 experts must overwhelmingly agree the food delivers that indescribable 'wow' factor.

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