

BRITISH CHEESE AWARDS 2008 – THE WINNERS

The British Cheese Awards, the annual celebration of the very best of the British Cheese industry, has announced the winners of this year's hard fought competition, with quality being recognised across the board, in both artisan and commercial sectors.

Of the record breaking 910 cheeses entered into this year's Awards, the Supreme Champion, as decided by a panel of top industry experts including cheese buyers, journalists, chefs and food critics, was judged as Barkham Blue from the Two Hoots creamery based in Barkham, Berkshire. The cheese described as having a sweet, spicy butter like taste with an aromatic peppery bite also scooped a hat-trick with the winning of the title 'Best English Cheese' and 'Best Blue Cheese'.

Other winners on the night, in which awards in 25 categories were handed out, together with 317 Bronze, Silver and Gold medals included the winner of Best Scottish Cheese 'Connage Crowdie' from the Connage Highland Dairy whose cows graze the clover rich pastures along the shores of the Moray Firth.

Other country awards included 'Laviston' from Knockdrinna Farmhouse Cheese which won best Irish and 'Pont Gar Garlic + Herbs' from Carmarthenshire Cheese which won best Welsh.

Sales of British cheese abroad continues to go from strength to strength with exports continuing to grow and buck economic trends. Daniel Hammer, representing the market leading American group of Central Market and HEB stores said he had been extremely impressed by the vast array of cheeses at this years awards and that he would be taking several of this years entries back to the US. This year's Best Export Cheese being a prime example of what Britain does best the 'Traditional Cheddar (E)' from J A & E Montgomery Ltd.

Special awards were handed out to Somerset cheesemaker Chris Duckett who was voted Cheese Person of the Year for unswerving dedication to making the highest quality cheeses over a number of decades. Also demonstrating that restaurants are now embracing the choice and quality that British Cheese has to offer the winner of Best British Cheeseboard went to Allium of Fairford, Gloucestershire.

Commenting on this years awards Juliet Harbutt founder and organiser of the British Cheese Awards said 'It has been another record breaking year with our highest number of entries ever. With record numbers of cheeses reaching medal winning status it's safe to say that British Cheese Industry is consistently creating World beating cheeses'.

Established in 1994 the British Cheese Awards were created to provide a symbol of excellence for cheese lovers, reward such excellence and highlight the extraordinary diversity and growth in British Cheese.

Award Winners in Detail

SUPREME CHAMPION 2008

Barkham Blue / Two Hoots Cheese

Beneath its sticky barely formed knobbly natural rind this blue cheese has a very buttery yellow interior characteristic of Channel Island milk with chunky blue blotchy veins. It tastes sweet with a spicy butter flavour and an aromatic peppery, rocket like bite. Visually it looks wicked, like a space capsule with a fine dusting of white, pale mould over a pale brown crust. It has lots of well scattered chunky blue streaks which give a spicy metallic 'teeth tingling' blue and a dark chocolate cocoa on the finish.

ALSO WINNER OF THE FOLLOWING 2008 AWARDS:-

BEST ENGLISH CHEESE 2008 – THE PATRICK RANCE TROPHY

BEST BLUE CHEESE - 2008

BEST IRISH CHEESE – EUGENE BURNS TROPHY

Lavistown / Knockdrinna Farmhouse Cheese

Created by Olivia Goodwille a forerunner in modern Irish cheese making this secret recipe cheese is now being made by award winning Irish cheesemaker 'Knockdrinna' last year. It is a semi-soft white, crumbly, low fat cheese which is made from the milk of the Friesian cow.

BEST WELSH CHEESE – DOUGAL CAMPBELL TROPHY

Pont Gar Garlic & Herbs / Carmarthenshire Cheese

A large deep wheel covered with a thick, firm fitting soft white penicillium mould. It has a soft custard texture all the way through and is almost runny under the rind. The fine herbs are barely visible thinly scattered near the rind and there's a few tiny rice holes throughout. The interior is deliciously smooth and creamy and feels wickedly rich and the garlic and herbs are wonderfully subtle.

BEST SCOTTISH CHEESE

Connage Crowdie / Connage Highland Dairy

This cheese has very light, mouse like texture with a lemon-zest tang to balance the sweet creaminess of the milk - a very honest simple cheese originally made by Scottish crofters.

BEST EXPORT CHEESE

Traditional Cheddar (e) / J A & E Montgomery

A multi award winner and supreme champion in 2004. One of only seven traditional cheddar makers, Montgomery's make seven to eight cheddars a day from their own milk producing a 'fruity' cheddar with a green grass spicy bite and a lingering savoury tang. This is a raw milk cheese.

BEST GOATS CHEESE

Farleigh Wallop No2 / Evenlode Partnership

A first time entry this soft white cheese has fresh thyme pressed into its soft white velvet crust which imbues a stark white interior. The cheese is dense yet creamy when young with just a hint of mushrooms. It becomes nearly liquid with age and the subtle hint of thyme and a nutty, aromatic character of the milk is unveiled.

CHEESE LOVERS' TROPHY

Isis /Oxford Cheese Co

Washed in Oxfordshire honey mead it has a sticky orange rind with a pervasive aroma that is both spicy and pungent. The cheese virtually hums when ripe and has a smooth, velvety almost runny interior with a spicy, yeasty tang.

BEST FRESH CHEESE

Full Fat Soft Cheese Plain/ Dan Dairies (UK) Ltd**

Superbly creamy curd cheese that feels like whipped creamy cheese cake yet has a lemony freshness so doesn't feel rich but irresistibly smooth and the perfect foil to smoked salmon, herbs or fruit - basically creamy cheese.

BEST SOFT WHITE CHEESE

Wigmore/Village Maid Cheese

Has a stunning texture – the cheese collapsed on cutting revealing its inner strength and character – it has a subtle ewes milk flavour like crème caramel. A washed curd cheese with orange/pink leathery rind and wonderful caramel taste and aromas associated with ewes' milk ... creamy to soft almost Brie-like at 3 months. This is a raw milk cheese.

BEST SEMI-SOFT CHEESE

Stinking Bishop/Charles Martell & Son

A wash-rind cheese dating back to the Cistercian monks who settled in Dymock where the cheese is made. Washed in fermented pear juice or 'Perry' the rind develops a smelly, pungent, orange, sticky rind. Named after an old variety of local pear – Stinking Bishop – this cheese is bound with cloth in a traditional manner.

BEST CHEDDAR

Extra Mature Cheddar/J A & E Montgomery Ltd

One of only seven traditional cheddar makers, Montgomery's make seven to eight cheddars a day from their own milk producing a 'fruity cheddar with a green grass spicy bite and lingering savoury tang. After the ravages of two world wars traditional cheese making has been reduced to just a few dedicated and determined producers. Thanks to the encouragement and commitment of the retailers like Neal's Yard the tide is turning. This is a raw milk cheese.

BEST TERRITORIAL (NON-CHEDDAR)

Red Leicester Aged/Long Clawson Dairy

Beneath the thin, leathery rind with its thick grey, coat is a bright orange cheese with a firm yet mellow texture, well rounded, nutty taste with a hint of orange zest – the extra age gives it a long fruit, slightly sweet finish.

BEST MODERN BRITISH CHEESE

Cornish Crumbly/Whalesborough Farm Foods

This semi-hard cheese is creamy, moist and crumbly. It has a slightly sharp, mildly acidic yet fresh taste with a delightful zing on the finish.

BEST FLAVOUR ADDED CHEESE

Ashdown Foresters Smoked/High Weald Dairy

This cheese is made in an attractive truckle from Guernsey milk giving the cheese a deep sunshine yellow colour and smooth rich texture - slowly smoked over oak-chips it is smooth, dense, rich and creamy with the subtle flavour of the smoke permeating the buttery cheese.

BEST NEW CHEESE

Kid Me Not/Tally Mountain

So new that we have yet to taste it. For more details contact the cheesemaker direct.

BEST CREAMERY CHEESE

Lake District Ex Mature Cheddar/Lake District Cheese Co

An excellent example of the new generation of creamery cheddars with good, hard, strong body and complex flavours – what a star with its sweet, fruity, mouth-watering tang.

BEST BRITISH CHEESEBOARD

Allium – Fairford, Gloucestershire

This multi award winning country restaurant has a fantastic British cheeseboard as a central feature of it's dining experience. With some 25-30 British cheese featured on their trolley including many of this year's award winning cheeses. Customers can choose as many or as few cheeses as they'd like with most selecting five to sample and enjoy. Traditional cheese and Artisan cheeses (or both) are featured heavily as are local West Country cheeses.

BEST ORGANIC CHEESE

Organic Somerset Brie /Lubborn Cheese Ltd

Has a wonderfully voluptuous interior that almost runs to meet you – rich yellow in colour, with a taste like warm melted butter, fresh mushrooms and freshly cut grass. Delicious!

CHEESE PERSON OF THE YEAR

Chris Duckett/Duckett's Caerphilly

At the Duckett Family Farm in Wedmore, Somerset, Chris Duckett still makes his Caerphilly according to a recipe used by his family over a century ago. While producing one of the finest Caerphilly cheese on the market today Chris won the award for his lifetime commitment to making superb quality, traditional Caerphilly and his contribution to Britain's cheese heritage. He has always given generously of his time and knowledge to other cheesemakers.

BEST PDO/PGI - DAVID REED TROPHY

Keen's Trad. Mature Cheddar/Keen's Cheddar Ltd

One of only three cheddar makers belonging to the Artisan Cheedar Presidium it captured the hearts of the judges with its strong, raw onion bite and spicy, lingering savoury tang. The cheese is made using raw milk.

BEST NEW DELI

Yellowwedge Cheese/Twickenham

This fantastic emporium of cheese and fine food first opened its doors in October 2007. With over 40 British cheeses on sale at any time this deli excited the judges with its range, fresh approach to retailing and frequent, clever promotional activity. Their knowledge of how cheese should be kept, served and packaged complements their often 'funky' approach to attracting customers attention.