

FOOD AND DRINK NEWSLETTER

January 2010

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
**FOOD
& DRINK
AWARDS
2009**

*A Happy New Year from the
Food and Drink Awards*

2009 Awards update

The title of 'Restaurant of the Year' went to The Vine House Hotel and Restaurant in Paulerspury. Yvette James, who accepted the trophy on behalf of owners Marcus and Julie Springett, said they were delighted. *"Marcus and Julie are absolutely passionate about what they do – it is their life! The food, the people, the service – they're the key ingredients in running a successful restaurant and receiving this award is proof that they're getting it right. They're absolutely thrilled".*



Yvette Jones of The Vine House collecting the trophy from Marcus Wareing for the Restaurant of the Year

Meanwhile The White Swan at Harringworth was named 'Pub or Bar Restaurant of the Year', and its owners, husband and wife team Adam and Gina Longden, were almost speechless after hearing their names announced. *"It's amazing"* said Adam. *"We often work seven days a week and this is real reward for all that effort, especially looking after three kids as well!"* Added Gina *"Whether we've got two*

people or fifty-two people in the pub, we'd like to think we give them the service they deserve and perhaps that's what the judges recognised when they came to visit - we're just delighted!"

Almost 500 people registered on the www.letyourselfgrow.com website to support the venue of



Winners of the Pub or Bar Restaurant of the Year Adam and Gina Longden collecting their trophy from Marcus Wareing

their choice. This public involvement was seen as vital in keeping the intentions behind the awards: to generate public interest; to raise the profile of the excellent food and drink on offer in Northamptonshire; to help raise standards amongst producers and venues by promoting healthy competition; and to increase custom.

• *Continued on page 2*

A Celebration of Northamptonshire – or finding the best of the best

In October, there were over 400 guests at Althorp to celebrate what's best in Northamptonshire. The high spot of the night for at least a third of those present was the announcement of the trophy winners in the venue categories by double Michelin-starred chef Marcus Wareing.

Marcus, whose latest book 'Nutmeg and Custard' has just been published, said he was honoured to be part of the competition. *"I'm really*



Marcus Wareing

very impressed with what's being achieved here in Northamptonshire. I've always been keen on sourcing local and supporting local and these awards are a great way of promoting what's on offer here. In fact, I'm thinking I should take the idea back to my home county of Lancashire to get them to do the same!"

Marcus spoke about his life in cooking and his achievements – including his performance in the omelette

challenge on TV's Saturday Kitchen.

Marcus was introduced on stage by Sophie Grigson who spoke about her involvement in the awards: as a judge in the product and drink categories, and as a mystery shopper. Sophie stressed that buying local and supporting these businesses will not only help to encourage the development of a "Northamptonshire" range of products – it will also boost the local economy and encourage us all to be better educated about our food and where it comes from.

Representatives of all ten finalists were on the edges of their seats as the announcements were made.

Contact from Us? Please let us know how best to keep in touch with you. Email rachel@rachelmallows.com or telephone 01933 664437 or write to us at Arch Villa, 23 High Street, Bozeat, NN29 7NF

Northamptonshire Food and Drink Awards 2009

Find out more
www.letyourselfgrow.com

In search of the 'best of the best'

The title of 'Best Local Produce' went to 'Sauls of Spratton' for their 'Potted Beef' and it is an award which owner Chris Saul says surpasses any international accolades they've received. *"This really means the world to us. To be recognised in this way by our own county is just fabulous".*

Meanwhile the title of 'Best Drink' went to Northampton's Frog Island Brewery for their beer 'Fire-Bellied Toad'. *"It's very difficult to produce a good beer using just a single hop" said brewery partner Mandy Littler "but we've proved that it can be done and we're delighted to receive this award. No doubt we'll be opening a few bottles to celebrate!"*

At the Holdenby Food Show, almost 1,000 samples of the finalist products and drinks were taken. Members of the public were invited to taste the shortlisted products in the Best Local Product and the Best Drink competitions, and give an opinion.

The runners-up in the four categories were: Mellow Yellow rapeseed oil by Farrington Oils (Best Local Product), Northamptonshire Bitter from Hoggleys Brewery (Best Drink), The Saracen's Head at Little Brington (Pub or Bar Restaurant of the Year), Oundle Mill, Oundle (Restaurant of the Year).

Our congratulations go to all those involved from the winning entries. Whilst commiserating with those who didn't win, we would stress that the judging was difficult and every one of the finalists should be proud to have been shortlisted. Bring on the competition next year!

2009 Awards update (from front page)



The best of the best

Back row (l-r): Bruce Littler (Frog Island), Adam Gray (Rhodes Twenty Four), William Sitwell (Editor, Waitrose Food Illustrated), Stephen Bulmer (Brookhall Cookery School) **Middle row (l-r):** (in pink) Rachel Mallows (Competition Co-ordinator), Chris Saul (Sauls of Spratton), Duncan Farrington (Farrington Oils), Andre Gonzales de Savage (Northamptonshire Enterprise Ltd) **Front row (l-r):** (in green) Mandy Littler (Frog Island), Sophie Grigson, Emma Price (Sauls of Spratton), Julie Hogg (Hoggleys Brewery)



Sarah Evans of The Saracen's Head, Little Brington



Jeremy Medley of Oundle Mill

Training

Northamptonshire Enterprise Limited runs free training courses for Northamptonshire's small to medium sized tourism, leisure and hospitality businesses. The courses are funded through the East Midlands Tourism quality improvement programme. For more information and to book, please contact Susan Kay on **01604 609593** or susan.kay@northamptonshireenterprise.ltd.uk

Tuesday 16 February (10.30 – 3.30)

"Menu for Success" (food quality workshop) at Northampton College

Thursday 25 February (9.30 – 4.30)

"Providing an Accessible Visitor Experience" (disability awareness training) at Kettering Park Hotel

Tuesday 9 March (10.30 – 3.30)

"Quality Matters" - how to improve your products and media profile at minimal cost at Kelmarsh Hall

Tuesday 16 March (10.30 – 3.00)

"Winning Entry" – for businesses wishing to enter the 2010 Enjoy England Excellence awards at Highgate House.

Wednesday 24 March (morning)

"Focus on Food for Profit" contact us for further information.

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In search of the 'best of the best'

Other Awards

Not content with reaching the shortlist of the Northamptonshire Food and Drink Awards 2009, some of our entrants have had successes in other awards.

The Red Lion, Sibbertoft reached the final four of the Best Wine Pub in The Publican Food and Drink Awards 2009; whilst **The Walnut Tree Inn, Blisworth** was named as the Regional Winner of the "Strictly come

Ploughmans" competition by The West Country Farmhouse Cheesemakers.

Murray's at Whittlebury Hall was the Winner of The Foodie Award 2009 for Northamptonshire as voted for by The FOODIE Square Guide readers.

Hoggeleys Brewery won a Rosette for the Brewery in the 2009 CAMRA Good Bottled Beer Guide and Gold Stars for 4 of their beers: Solstice Stout 5%, Mill Lane Mild 4%, Yuletide Ale 7.2% and

Northamptonshire Bitter 4% (runner-up in the Northamptonshire Food and Drink Awards 2009).

Welland Valley Vineyard gained a Silver Award in the Mercian Vineyards Association annual competition for Steeplechase 2006, Bronze for Tickled Pink 2006 and also for Nasby Red, and Highly Commended for Farndon Dale.

Truly the best of the best.

Feedback from 2009 awards

The first year of anything has to be a bit of an experiment. Not everything will work quite the way it was intended to. However, the awards were viewed as a success by the nineteen finalists. Entrants enjoyed the process and found the entry form quite straightforward. The judging process was thought to be transparent enough but a recurrent comment was how one product type could be judged against another, or a coaching inn against an urban bar. Of course, the organizers are at pains to point out that our judges didn't do that: they rated each product against strict marking criteria. Scores were weighted in accordance with the published scheme and relative rankings produced. The shortlisted entries were tasted or mystery shopped by different judges with a similar weighting of scores being produced.

Finally, an expert panel discussed the rankings and produced the list of trophy winners – and all of this was under the strict supervision of our resident probity expert!

The organizers are changing the entry forms to take account of comments made, and are considering an online entry form for 2010.

The involvement of well-known experts such as Sophie Grigson, William Sitwell (Editor of Waitrose Food Illustrated), and Marcus Wareing was seen by entrants as clear evidence of the status of the awards. Food and drink producers seemed to enjoy the element of public involvement at the Holdenby Food Show and venues were happy to have their customers vote for them on the www.letyourselfgrow.com website.

Some interesting quotes from the finalists:

"It's opened our eyes to finding a local sparkling wine",

"We will definitely be making changes as a result of this process"

"We're grateful for the opportunity to reach a wider audience through this award."

"We used it as a team-building exercise getting everyone involved from the start."

From Marcus Wareing's Nutmeg and Custard

Chorizo stuffed French toast with Manchego

Serves 4

1 unsliced loaf of your favourite bread, cut into 8 slices (2cm thick)

100g chorizo, peeled and diced

1 medium onion, finely diced

50g Manchego cheese, grated

½ tsp table salt

Coarsely ground black pepper

½ tsp smoked paprika

50g unsalted butter

3 tbs vegetable oil

3 medium free range eggs

300ml semi skimmed or whole milk

Heat one tablespoon of vegetable oil in a medium sized frying pan over a moderate heat. Add the onion and chorizo until soft, mix with the cheese and pepper. Divide the mix between the four slices leaving a 1cm edge on each piece. Brush the 1 cm edge with a little of the egg mix then place the other slice of bread on top and press down to seal. Heat a large frying pan with 1 tablespoon of vegetable oil over a moderate heat. Place one of the 'sandwiches' into the egg mix and allow to soak for 30 seconds, ensuring it is well submerged. Dust with the smoked paprika then place in the pan, repeat the egg soaking with another 'sandwich'. Brown each sandwich on each side then add half of the butter and brown further. Remove, clean the pan and repeat the process with the remaining two sandwiches. Serve warm with a dollop of crème fraîche if desired.



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Meet the team

The Northamptonshire Food and Drink Awards are run by Northamptonshire Enterprise Limited.

On a day to day basis,

the people behind the scenes talking to entrants and the press, producing the entry forms, organizing the judges and the judging, and generally making the whole thing happen are the Food and Drink Team at Rachel Mallows Services to Business.

The Mallows company has been providing a complementary range of services to businesses, charities, organizations and individuals since 1988. The range is extensive, but covers: event organisation, project management, design and print, computer and management training, secretarial services, UK Online, NVQs, psychometric evaluation, marketing, mentoring, coaching, advice and guidance, and charity

administration. Through its sister company, enthusepr, it has a creative team to assist.

The Food and Drink Team is headed by Rachel herself who deals with sponsorship, Northamptonshire Enterprise Limited, and is the final arbiter on problems which arise. Esmée Sansome-James handles our databases, keeps in touch with entrants, and helps with the back office tasks. Anna Murby handles the press side of things, helps find our judges, helps with the judging and also tries to keep in touch with entrants. Sue Loggin also meets entrants and partners.

Other Rachel Mallows team members involved in the 2009 awards were Lyn, Lynne, Yvonne, and Coralie. Finally, Graham has responsibility for all elements of the judging process and for driving the awards forward. With his background in probity, governance, and project management, Graham was the ideal person to run the judging processes.

Northamptonshire Food and Drink Awards 2010

We are already planning for next year's awards. As well as listening to the views of this year's entrants, we have spoken with the people running other awards, our own judges from 2009, our colleagues in the press and media, potential sponsors, and everyone else who has given us their thoughts. The upshot is that we are now working through the options to make sure that as many people as possible enter in 2010. We want to

make sure that the process is as straightforward as possible. We will retain the desire for the awards to be inherently fair.

We would like to thank everyone for their comments on the 2009 awards. We will be launching the 2010 awards in February with details of the categories which are up for grabs, how to enter, and much more. Please look out for further information.

Food for profit?

In November, 30 people from dining venues in the county attended a free course provided by Northamptonshire Enterprise Limited on "Focus on Food for Profit". The half-day course outlined the hidden potential profit in all catering and opened delegates' eyes to the possibilities of reducing unexpected overheads. Amongst the top tips were a method of cascading the use of oil in fryers to maximize its useful life, and the *real* way to ripen tomatoes (you'll have to go to a session to find out!). The course also explained simple ways to calculate and maximise profits.

Menu for success

Northamptonshire Enterprise is holding a FREE food and drink workshop on Tuesday 16 February 2010 at Northampton College. Live Tourism's latest "Menu for Success" workshop will help you to improve the quality of your business and provides ideas for menus, dishes, marketing and what award judges are looking for. The workshop is relevant to all catering businesses – pubs, restaurants, and cafés.

Topics include:

- Live cooking demonstration from an award winning chef

- Awards – their importance and how to win them – from AA Rosettes to the Northamptonshire Food and Drink Awards
- Menu costing and menu writing
- Marketing ideas
- Displays by local award-winning producers
- Fishy tales – is it possible to buy fresh fish in Northamptonshire; and will diners buy it?

The workshop will be run by Peter Birnie of Live Tourism, with several specialist presenters.

Date: Tuesday 16 February 2010

Time: 10.30 am – 3.30 pm

Venue: Northampton College (Booth Lane, Northampton)

To book a place contact **Susan Kay** on **01604 609393** or **susan.kay@northamptonshireenterprise.ltd.co.uk**