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The county's Kent Young Chefs are crowned in Produced in Kent's electric Live Cook Off

The Produced in Kent initiative to seek out the county's most talented budding chefs and get Kent's young people cooking with local and seasonal ingredients, saw two newcomers to the competition lift the Junior and Senior Kent Young Chef Award 2010 trophies at last week's electric Live Cook Off at the county's premier catering facility - Thanet College.

With the competition made possible by the generous sponsorship of Hadlow College, kff (Kent Frozen Foods) and Woods Restaurant, Produce Store & Bars, the youngest competitor in the finals 11 year old Thomas Perkins of Holmesdale Technology College, in Snodland lifted the Junior trophy for his original Gamekeeper's Supper, made with pheasant caught locally by Thomas's gamekeeper father. Thomas demonstrated an "unflappable style" that bowled the judges over to produce a "well seasoned and flavoursome dish that worked beautifully" using ingredients sourced from the 'Garden of England'.

Commenting on his win Thomas Perkins said: "This is brilliant! It's been such a tough competition with a really high standard of dishes so I'm absolutely thrilled to win! I love cooking and just feel so free when I cook – I can let my imagination run. Kent Young Chef Award has been a brilliant experience and I think it's really good for children and young people to be doing something like this."

Sixteen year old Steven Yap of The New School at West Heath, lifted the Senior trophy with his technically outstanding Ballotine of Guinea Fowl & Duxelle Stuffing with Spinach Tagliatelle, Chestnut Purée, Mushrooms & Bacon, which the judges said was a "good all round dish with Autumnal flavours".

Commenting on his win Steven Yap said: “This is the first time I’ve entered anything like this and I certainly didn’t expect this result. Kent Young Chef Award has been a really good experience, I’ve thoroughly enjoyed it and a win like this boosts your confidence. It’s great!”

The eight talented finalists in the Live Cook Off were aged between 11-16 years and had to make it past 66 recipe entries from 28 schools. The competitors had just two hours to transform their original written recipes, featuring local and seasonal produce, into a tasty main course dish to serve two people. Supported by the KM Group, radio presenter Johnny Lewis relayed the exciting action packed final back to kmfm listeners on the Myrna Seldon show.

The eight competitors cooked up their dishes in front of a live audience and the judging panel including celebrity chef Richard Phillips of GMTV’s Lorraine Kelly and BBC TV’s Ready, Steady, Cook fame; Claire Wood the talented head chef at Woods Restaurant, Produce Store & Bars in The Pantiles, Tunbridge Wells; as well as Thanet College lecturer Sue George.

Judge Richard Phillips, and one of Kent’s leading restaurateurs, said he was “wowed by the standard”. Phillips said: “It’s an honour to inspire these young people and to reinforce their enthusiasm and passion. It’s great to see such talent and flair come through in a competition such as Kent Young Chef Award. We saw a very, very good standard here, but it was more than just the high standard it was the unusual and challenging local ingredients the finalists chose to work with which set their stall so high. Technically they went to the top of their game.”

As part of their prize all eight finalists will visit one of Richard Phillips three restaurants in Kent – which include Richard Phillips at Chapel Down, The Hengist and Thackerays – and the finalists will experience a taster day as a real chef.

The Junior category saw the return of two of last year’s competitors Lana Foyle, of Ashford School who cooked a dish with wild rabbit and a “near perfect and delicious” accompaniment of pan seared Brussel sprouts and bacon; whilst Alice Browning of St John Fisher Catholic Comprehensive School in Chatham, deftly prepared an original recipe of Pigeon with Blackberry Sauce. Newcomer Sophie Buck from Ashford School impressed the judges with her “inspirational dish” of Guinea Fowl Fricassée served with Pumpkin Mash & Dwarf Beans achieving a “good depth in flavour” and an “impressive use of local produce” that saw her just pipped at the post by Thomas Perkins.

In the Senior category newcomers Ryan Whiting and Ellie Smith competed from The Towers School & Sixth Form College in Kennington. Ryan Whiting’s ‘Down the Road’ Organic Pan Roasted Marsh Fed Cannon Of Lamb was “perfectly cooked and rested”; Ellie’s Slow Roasted Challock of Pork Belly was one of the “most perfectly balanced dishes of the day” whilst Alice Baddeley, of Combe Bank School cooked her “flavoursome” Venison Fillet served with Parsnip Bonfire & Popping Pumpkin Seeds.

If you’d like to try one of the recipes at home go to www.producedinkent.co.uk or to see the exciting action from the live cook off visit www.kentonline.co.uk

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Thomas Perkins Aged 11

Kent Young Chef Award Junior Winner

“It’s an honour to inspire these young people and to reinforce their enthusiasm and passion. It’s great to see such talent and flair come through in a competition such as Kent Young Chef Award. Technically they went to the top of their game.”

Richard Phillips

Celebrity chef and Kent restaurateur

An open invitation to Kent Young Chef Award Charity Dinner

Now the two 2010 winners Steven Yap and Thomas Perkins will travel to Woods Restaurant in The Pantiles at Tunbridge Wells to design a three course dinner for the Kent Young Chef Award Charity Dinner on **Thursday 20 January 2011**. The glittering evening, which is open to anyone in the county to attend, will include a three course meal designed by the young chefs (in conjunction with head chef Claire Wood) and the two award winning cooks will be treated as ‘guests of honour’ at the evening.

Claire Wood said: “We’ve seen some wonderfully talented young chefs emerging from the Kent Young Chef Award competition and we’re really excited to give the people of Kent a taste of the two winners’ best ideas for this fantastic charity dinner. We’re also thrilled to be able to donate £5 from every ticket sold to the Kent Air Ambulance - so I hope lots of local fans of Woods Restaurant will book their place at this very special evening.”

To reserve your place

To secure a seat at the glittering **Kent Young Chef Award Charity Dinner** call 01892 614411 or visit www.woodsrestaurant.co.uk to book and pre-pay, the evening commences at 7pm with a complimentary glass of sparkling wine followed by a three-course meal for £25.

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For more information or images on:



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Issued: 29 November 2010

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