



NEWS RELEASE

## **The winner takes it all as the Taste of Kent Awards recognises the ‘Garden of England’s’ food and drink heroes**

Companies across Kent were celebrating their win last week, in the county’s most prestigious food and drink awards – the **Taste of Kent Awards 2010**. The brainchild of local food champions, **Produced in Kent**, the glittering awards night at Leeds Castle on Friday 25th February recognised the county’s most outstanding food and drink producers, retailers, restaurants, dining pubs and farmers’ market during 2010.

The night was hosted by John Warnett and Gemma Sterba, presenters on BBC Radio Kent’s breakfast show, whilst speeches were made by the recently honoured Amanda Cottrell OBE, patron of Produced in Kent, Janet Goode, Partner, Whitehead Monckton the Main Sponsor of the Taste of Kent Awards and Julie Monkman, Manager of Produced in Kent.

Julie Monkman told the gathered audience, “Each of these Taste of Kent Award winners, together with the finalists, is doing something amazing in this corner of England. The Taste of Kent Award 2010 winners are our county’s food and drink heroes and have put the ‘Garden of England’ on the British food and drink map! Not only are these entrepreneurs growing, producing or working with local ingredients, but they are helping to revive and maintain traditional Kentish food and drink and centuries old production methods, but with cutting edge 21<sup>st</sup> century technology! They should all feel very proud of what they have achieved and Produced in Kent is deeply honoured to present 2010’s dining dynasty to the county!”

### **Eastern promise**

The east of the county clinched six category awards with some seasoned champions picking up a Taste of Kent award for a second time, whilst other newcomers rose to win an accolade for the first time.

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**Kent Meat Retailer of the Year 2010** (sponsored by NFU Mutual) was extremely closely fought with the three nominees reaching very high standards for all areas of the judging. In the end family-run **Godmersham Game** based in Mystole, near Canterbury was delighted to lift the award. Godmersham Game, run by Phil and Pam Miles, provides top quality game and game products, much of which is sourced from the county including pheasant, partridge, wood pigeon, wild rabbit, hare and venison and a delicious range of Godmersham-made venison sausages and burgers. After three consecutive years of making it to the final three, the victory was particularly sweet for the company.

Another closely fought battle in the east of the county came between former winners Ramsgate Brewery and Whitstable Brewery in **Best Kent Brewery 2010** category (sponsored by Cask Marque). But in the end both the public and judges vote saw **The Whitstable Brewery** surge ahead as the winner with the small, independent brewery, which specialises in short-run and custom made beers, responsible for putting delicious beers such as 'Oyster Stout' and 'East India Pale Ale' on the brewing map.

One of the most popular categories amongst the general public **Kent Local Food Retailer** (sponsored by sff, Stephens Fresh Foods) was a particularly strongly contested category. **Macknade Fine Foods**, just edged past Quex Barn to clinch the award for the second consecutive year, with Faversham's flagship foodhall offering both a breadth of produce and a great retail experience, with both a fishmongers and café on-site.

The newly branded **Kent Artisan Food Producer** category (sponsored by Barclays Bank) saw an exciting newcomer lift the award. **Corinne's Creative Kitchen**, based in Selling, south east of Faversham, was only established in 2007 by the Bengali born owner and in three years Corinne's Creative Kitchen has already come to prominence with its stunning range of Asian meals produced from local produce for direct order, corporate events and retail customers, whilst Corinne's Asian cuisine cookery classes have also made their mark in the county.

**Kent Restaurant of the Year** (sponsored by Visit Kent) this category proved the most closely contested of all with **The Secret Garden** in Mersham Le Hatch, Ashford, picking up the award for the very first time and just edging past the other two finalists – two times former winner The Mulberry Tree and Eddie Gilbert's. Added to the outstanding dining experience, the mystery diners said the restaurant showed a great use of local produce in their menu and that this allegiance to local sourcing was highly visible within the restaurant and on the menus.

The popular **Kent Dining Pub of the Year** award (sponsored by kff, Kent Frozen Foods) was justly won by **The Plough at Stalisfield Green**. This is the second time the award as been bestowed on this authentic country pub who pride themselves on their strong links with the local farming community from whom they source seasonal ingredients for their menu.

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## Mid-Kent movers & shakers

Mid-Kent, famed for its outstanding vineyards, performed particularly well again in the drinks categories of the Taste of Kent Awards.

**Best Kent Vineyard 2010** (sponsored by Kent Life) saw some of the county's most respected vineyards competing for the title - with each vineyard asked to present two wines from their collection to showcase for tasting amongst a panel of expert tasters. In the end the multi-award winning **Chapel Down Winery** in Tenterden was judged the most outstanding vineyard during last year; whilst the multiple former winner **Biddenden Vineyards** lifted the title for **Best Kent Cider Maker 2010** (sponsored by **Wilkins Kennedy FKC**) for the second year.

## West Kent's winners

**Kent Seafood Retailer of the Year 2010** (sponsored by South East Seafood) was another closely contested category between previous winner Eddie Gilberts, new entry Sankey's of Tunbridge Wells and Octopusy. Despite a close result, **Sankey's** shone through in the final vote. Sankey's a family owned and run business based in Tunbridge Wells since 1961 boasts a unique pub and Seafood Brasserie in its old cellars, with the restaurant selling fresh fish and shellfish delivered daily. The Fishmongers is only in its second year, but already offers what is claimed to be the 'largest range of fresh fish and seafood products in the South East', which clearly impressed the judges.

With the rise of Kent Farmers' Markets across the county, now standing at 40, the competition was always going to be tough in this popular category. So the second consecutive victory for the Hadlow College sponsored category of **Kent Farmers' Market of the Year 2010** was all the more impressive for **Shipbourne Farmers' Market**. Shipbourne, which has now won a Taste of Kent Award three times since the awards were first launched, holds its multi-award winning weekly market in the grounds and historic church at Shipbourne. Bob Taylor, the manager of the market, was particularly commended by the judges for having taken on board the judges recommendations from previous competitions.

**Owlet Fruit Juice** was delighted to pick up its very first Taste of Kent Award by winning the **Kent Juice Producer of the Year 2010** (sponsored by Kent County Council). With 20 years experience in making high quality fresh pressed juices from fruit grown in Owlets' orchards, the company has won 28 awards over two decades and was delighted to add a prestigious Taste of Kent Award to its trophy cabinet.

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## North Kent's shining star

**Kent Food Product of the Year 2010** (sponsored by Opies) proved something of a sweet sensation this year with Kent Honey Caramels from Madame Oiseau, Kent Honey from Bluebell Hill Apiaries and Lavender Jelly by Kent Fine Foods all competing for the category which recognises the most unique and innovative new food product in the county. In the end the award went to first time winner **Kent Fine Foods** for its top quality **Lavender Jelly**, hand made in small batches with natural, local ingredients

Visit [www.producedinkent.co.uk](http://www.producedinkent.co.uk) or [www.tasteofkentawards.co.uk](http://www.tasteofkentawards.co.uk) from Tuesday 1 March 2011 to read in full about the Taste of Kent Awards winners 2010.

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### **Notes to the editor:**

The competition is the brainchild of Produced in Kent, which champions Kent's food and drink producers and retailers. In 2009 the awards saw an incredible 89 per cent leap in votes, and the 2010 competition continued to reach the taste buds of Kent consumers with overall voting sustained at just over 10,000 votes for the second consecutive year. Indeed, 542 businesses and products were nominated by the general public as being worthy for an award in one of the twelve 'Oscars' of Kent's food and drink businesses. The three finalists in each of the categories voted by the general public were then subject to an expert judging panel, mystery shoppers or mystery diners – who selected the final twelve winners.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Winner</b>	<b>Sponsored by</b>
<b>Kent Meat Retailer of the Year 2010</b>	Godmersham Game	NFU Mutual
<b>Best Kent Brewery 2010</b>	The Whitstable Brewery	Cask Marque
<b>Best Kent Vineyard 2010</b>	The Chapel Down Winery	Kent Life
<b>Kent Seafood Retailer of the Year 2010</b>	Sankey's	South East Seafood
<b>Kent Local Food Retailer of the Year 2010</b>	Macknade Fine Foods	sff, Stephens Fresh Foods
<b>Kent Farmers' Market of the Year 2010</b>	Shipbourne Farmers' Market	Hadlow College
<b>Kent Juice Producer of the Year 2010</b>	Owlet Fruit Juice	Kent County Council
<b>Kent Artisan Food Producer of the Year 2010</b>	Corinne's Creative Kitchen	Barclays Bank
<b>Kent Food Product of the Year 2010</b>	Lavender Jelly by Kent Fine Foods	Opies
<b>Kent Restaurant of the Year 2010</b>	The Secret Garden	Visit Kent
<b>Kent Dining Pub of the Year 2010</b>	The Plough at Stalisfield Green	kent frozen foods
<b>Best Kent Cider Maker 2010</b>	Biddenden Vineyards	Wilkins Kennedy FKC

### **Quotes from a selection of the winners:**

*"Winning the Kent Farmers' Market of the Year again gives recognition to our stallholders and our volunteers who together create the unique 'Shipbourne shopping experience'.*

*"We want to be able to share this experience with many more shoppers who are looking for both value for money and the best in local produce." - **Bob Taylor, Market Manager, Shipbourne Farmers' Market***

*"I am so proud to have won Kent Artisan Food Producer of the Year. Being a small business this award means so much to us working on our own." - **Corinne Goodman, Corinnes Creative Kitchen***

*"We have been shortlisted for Kent Meat Retailer of the Year four years in a row – so it is a total surprise that this year we have won! We were up against the big boys and so pleased that this year we have walked away with the award." - **Phil Miles, Godmersham Game***

*"This is a fantastic piece of news, and we'd like to thank all our customers for voting!"* - **Suzie & Colin Corfield, Owners, Owlet Fruit Juice, winners of Kent Juice Producer of the Year 2010**

*"We were very proud and honoured to be nominated by the people of Kent to receive this award and delighted to win the Best Kent Vineyard category. Produced in Kent do an amazing job for local producers and as ever the Taste of Kent Awards highlighted all that is great about food and drink from our fantastic county."* - **Rebecca Hirst, Brand Development Manager, The Chapel Down Winery**

*"For someone who works on their own, and doesn't have huge marketing or financial support, it is fantastic to receive countywide recognition and be awarded Kent Food Product of the Year for our Lavender Jelly. I'd like to say a big thank you to Produced in Kent and to everyone who voted for our product."* - **Matthew Kearsley-Lawson, owner, Kent Fine Foods**

*"It is once again a fantastic feeling to win. We work very hard to source local produce and drink to serve in the pub, preferring to go straight to the farmers for beef, lamb and pork. We work with some fabulous producers and enjoy being able to explain to our customers exactly where the food they are eating is from."* - **Amy Lloyd, landlady, The Plough at Stalisfield Green**

*"Secret Garden has been established for 5 years. Throughout this time we have been dedicated to using local seasonal produce. We are very pleased to be awarded Kent Restaurant of the Year 2010 and will endeavour to make sure that all our customers and potential customers of the future get to hear that we have won this award."* - **Stephanie Wanstall, Owner, The Secret Garden**

*"I am absolutely thrilled to have won Kent Local Food Retailer of the Year. It means the world to me and to the staff at Macknade. Thank you to all our customers who voted for us, and thank you to all our suppliers who have made us the success we are today."* - **Stephano Cuomo, owner, Macknade Fine Foods**

*"Having been nominated in three categories for Taste of Kent Awards, we were delighted to be the winner of the Best Cider Maker once again. The awards are very important to us as they bring together the best food and drink producers across our county, and to be shortlisted to the top three in three categories reflects our support from our customers, both trade and retail."* - **Julian Barnes, Managing Director, Biddenden Vineyards**