

Press release 29 June, 2011

Happy Beef wins inaugural Wirral Farmers' Market Food and Farming Dragon's Den



It was a tough competition and a difficult decision for the judges, but the winner of the first Wirral Farmers' Market 'Dragon's Den' has been decided.

Producers from across the region gathered at New Ferry village hall last night (June 28) to present their business ideas to a panel of judges who included Mary Walton (Wirral Farmers' Market), Philip Ambler (Business Link), David Mooney (Cheshire Taste), Andrew Pimbley (Manager Claremont Farm) and Jane Casson (Made in Cheshire).

There were nine contestants from across the region and the winner was Happy Beef pies by Alison Davies.

On their farm, the Davies' raise and breed their own grass-fed Hereford cattle and started taking their meat to farmers' markets. Then they started to make their own pies, using their own all butter pastry as they realised they wanted to have much more of a link between the public and the farmer. They have started selling locally at Farmers' Market and to local Frodsham to pubs and shops.

The pies include Simply Steak, Magnificent Mince, Blue Cheese Surprise, Ladies Red Wine Pastry and Paprika Twist. But they didn't stop with just their meat and realised they need to provide a vegetarian option as well. "We felt there was a market in the North West for a happy, beef pie and we are passionate about local and sustainable food" said Alison Davis. "In fact one of the hardest things is to make a really good gravy that stays in the pies!"

Judge and well-known chef and restaurateur David Mooney said "They have a fantastic passion for their produce. We were all blown away by the standard of the produce from all the entrants and it was especially interesting as a lot of these producers were new to me."

The Dragon's Den prize includes a free stall at Wirral Farmers' Market for two months, a table in the Wirral Farmers' Market Tent at the Wirral Food and Drink Festival on August 28/29, advice from Business Link and mentoring from Reaseheath College. Philip Ambler said "This package of support will help Happy Beef to plan and grow their business and we look forward to working with Alison to help her realise her objectives."

Backford Belles came second with their creamy ice-cream made from their own Jersey cows. Judge Mary Walton said: "They came a very close second and it was a very difficult choice so we decided to award an extra prize." Jane Casson added "We decided to offer support and mentoring to Backford Belles as well as Happy Beef due to the high quality of the entrants and in both cases they demonstrated the commitment of local farmers to sustain their farms in difficult economic times by producing their own value added products".

Andrew Pimbley, Manager of Claremont Farm and organiser of the Wirral Food and Drink Festival commented “The region has some fantastic producers and we look forward to seeing Alison at the Food Festival where she will be on show to the expected 25,000 visitors”.

The full list of contestants was:

- Mike Moreton – Find Inspiration in Food
- Kathryn Croker – Miffed Squirrel
- Amarjit – Nice ‘n’ Spicy Indian Vegetarian Foods
- Ruth Littler – Backford Belles Ice Cream
- Mary Saul – Stew in a pot
- Bonnie Stedman - Bonnie’s Muesli
- Alison Davies – Happy Beef
- Rosalind Crow – Parsnipship Vegetarian Foods
- Bernadine Tay – QuinTEAssential

You can see most of the producers at the Wirral Farmers’ Market, the next market is on Saturday July 9 where QuinTEAssential and Happy Beef will be making their first appearance in the new outside tent.

... Ends ...

Photo captions

dragons-den-01.jpg

Judges and winner left to right:

Philip Ambler (Business Link), Mary Walton (Wirral Farmers Market), Andrew Pimbley (Claremont Farm), David Mooney (Cheshire Taste), Alison Davies (Happy Beef), Jane Casson (Made in Cheshire)

dragons-den-02.jpg

Alison Davies (Happy Beef) during her presentation

dragons-den-03.jpg

Backford Belles’ Ruth Littler (Left) during her presentation to the judges

dragons-den-03.jpg

Backford Belles’ Ruth Littler (Left) during her presentation to the judges

dragons-den-04.jpg

Philip Ambler asks a question during the judging

dragons-den-05.jpg

Bernadine Tay from QuinTEAssential offers some tea for the judges to smell

dragons-den-06.jpg

Bonnie Stedman (Bonnie’s Muesli) and judges left to right:

Bonnie Stedman, Mary Walton (Wirral Farmers Market), Jane Casson (Made in Cheshire), David Mooney (Cheshire Taste), Philip Ambler (Business Link), Andrew Pimbley (Claremont Farm).

Editor's Notes

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The national award-winning Wirral Farmers' Market is run by a group of volunteers, who live and work in the area and organise the market in their spare time.

The Wirral Farmers Market is a voluntary organisation set up to help regenerate the area and its surroundings.

Visit www.wirralfarmersmarket.co.uk for more information.