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Victory for two budding young chefs in Produced in Kent's prestigious Kent Young Chef Award

Last Friday (27 November) saw the sizzling final of **Produced in Kent's** prestigious Kent Young Chef Award as eight students competed in the electric live cook off at the celebrated catering facilities at Thanet College.

Sponsored by **kff**, the leading local food service supplier, the Kent Young Chef Award also received the full media support of the KM Group, which enabled thousands of listeners to tune into the live action on the Vanessa Elms show on kmfm radio during the cook off.

Popular children's presenter of the award-winning Art Attack TV show, Neil Buchanan, took time out of his busy recording schedule to open the live cook off at 10am, while a large crowd of relatives, supporters and local dignitaries gathered to watch the televised final, including Produced in Kent's Patron Amanda Cottrell, the Lady Mayoress of Broadstairs & St Peters and the Prospective Conservative MP for Thanet Laura Sandys.

The eight finalists, aged between 11 and 16, donned their Kent Young Chef Award aprons and were given two hours to cook and serve their original main course recipes, all of which had to feature local and seasonal produce from the 'Garden of England'.

After a couple of hours of frenetic action in the professional skills kitchen at Thanet College, Alice Browning from St John Fisher Catholic Comprehensive School, Chatham was crowned the Kent Young Chef Award winner in the junior age group (YG 7 & 8). Alice produced a highly original 'Romney Marsh Lamb with Chocolate Peppermint Sauce', made with chocolate peppermint leaves grown in her garden.

Alice said: "This is so exciting I can't believe it. I got really nervous at the beginning and end and it got very hot in the kitchen. But I just tried to keep a cool head and get on with what I had to do. Winning is so brilliant and I'm very happy!"

James Dye of Swan Valley Community School, Swanscombe won the senior Kent Young Chef Award for his delicious 'Herb Crusted Rack of Lamb with 'Bubble and Squash' served with Kentish 'Double Vision' Cider and Redcurrant Jus'. James's father was a professional chef and now James hopes to train in the same profession.

Danielle Connolly-Ratcliffe director of D&T of Swan Valley Community School, watched James compete with his parents and she said: "Swan Valley is incredibly proud of James's achievement and we plan to make quite a fuss of him next week at school. We passionately believe in vocational education. What Produced in Kent's Kent Young Chef Award is doing across the county with this competition is fantastic. The standard here today has been so high."

Star judge Richard Phillips (who has three successful restaurants in Kent and is a regular chef on TV's Ready Steady Cook) also commented on the exceptionally high standards achieved. This, he said, made choosing two winners a very tough decision for the panel of judges, which included Roger Phillips, head of catering and hospitality at Thanet College, and Julie Monkman, manager of Produced in Kent.

Richard Phillips, said: "The standard of cooking and presentation was absolutely fantastic. The competitors have proved today that they are well ahead of their years in terms of what they have produced and achieved here. All the entrants chose a superb quality of local ingredients, and choosing the best quality, local ingredients is absolutely the key to creating an outstanding dish. All the contestants showed real passion and skill, they showed me that they cared about what they were doing and demonstrated a real love and flair for creative cooking. Well done to all of them!"

Head of catering and hospitality at Thanet College Roger Phillips echoed the sentiments of Richard Phillips, who trained at Thanet College under Roger. He said: "The flavours and presentation were outstanding and if any of the finalists want to come here as full time students in the future, they are more than welcome! They are a talented group of young people."

The two winners were presented with their awards and certificates and Richard Phillips generously extended the winners' prize to spend an afternoon in his restaurant kitchens to all the finalists, to whoops and applause of appreciation from the audience. All the parents received a bottle of Chapel Down sparkling wine and the two winners walked away with a fabulous Produced in Kent hamper each.

All the competitors received a certificate, branded aprons to keep and the two winners were interviewed live on kmfm radio.

Produced in Kent hopes to stage a second Kent Young Chef Award in 2010 and will announce details to secondary schools in Kent at the beginning of the Autumn term in 2010 and online at www.producedinkent.co.uk The KM Group and kff will also support the 2010 event and readers will be able to follow next year's competition on line on www.kentonline.co.uk, on radio kmfm and in the KM newspapers.

(Box out 1)

Competing for the Junior Kent Young Chef Award (year groups 7 & 8) were:

WINNER

Alice Browning from St John Fisher Catholic Comprehensive School, Chatham
Romney Marsh Lamb with Chocolate Peppermint Sauce

Lana Foyle from Ashford School
Kentish Lamb & Barley Stew

Georgina Bishop also from Ashford School
Pheasant Bacon & Apple Casserole served with Dauphinoise Potatoes & Shredded Savoy Cabbage

Ellie Garety-Jones from Swadelands School, Lenham
Rack of Lamb with Roast Seasonal Vegetable and Herby Potato Cake

Competing for the Senior Kent Young Chef Award (year groups 9, 10, 11) was:

WINNER

James Dye from Swan Valley Community School, Swanscombe
Herb Crusted Rack of Lamb with 'Bubble and Squash' served with a Kentish 'Double Vision' Cider and Redcurrant Jus

Adam Porter from Chaucer Technology School, Canterbury
Creamed Pheasant, Carrot and Leek Lasagne with Green Crunchy Winter Salad

Megan Cooper from Cator Park School, Beckenham
Roasted Belly of Pork with Shredded Brussel Sprout Mash, Honeyed Carrots, Sausage Meat, Sage & Apple Stuffing with Gravy

Andrew Moores from Towers School, Kennington
Pan Roasted Cheese Crusted Romney Marsh Lamp Chump with a Caper-barley Broth

All the finalists recipes can be seen or downloaded from the Produced in Kent website on www.producedinkent.co.uk

(Box out 2)

Romney Marsh Lamb with Chocolate Peppermint Sauce

By Alice Browning, winner of Kent Young Chef Award (YG7-8)

INGREDIENTS:

2 Romney Marsh Lamb chops
2 large potatoes
Olive oil, to drizzle
4 small carrots, slice lengthways
2 parsley sprigs, to garnish

For the marinade:

2 cloves of garlic, crushed to a paste with a pinch of salt
Juice of half a small lemon
1tbsp red wine vinegar
2tbsp fresh thyme leaves
½ small red onion
2tsp olive oil
Sea salt and black pepper

For the chocolate peppermint sauce:

4tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
35 chocolate peppermint leaves, finely chopped
2tbsp red wine vinegar
½tsp caster sugar
Sea salt and black pepper

METHOD:

To make the marinade: Grate the red onion into a bowl. Add the garlic, lemon juice, red wine vinegar and thyme then rub it all over the meat. Drizzle on the olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Leave it in the fridge for at least 1 hour.

Pre-heat the oven to 200°C. Thinly slice the potatoes (no thicker than a pound coin.) Spread out over a baking tray, overlapping. Drizzle with olive oil and season with salt. Place in the oven for one hour.

While the potatoes are in the oven make the chocolate peppermint sauce.

Heat the olive in a small saucepan on a medium heat. When hot add the garlic and fry until golden. Add half the chopped mint and fry for another minute. Add the red wine vinegar, and take it off the ring. Stir on the rest of the mint, season with salt and pepper then add sugar to taste.

When the potatoes have 16 minutes left put the lamb chops on the oven shelf directly above the potatoes (to let the juice drip onto the potatoes).

Turn the lamb over after 8 minutes. Then boil the carrots in salted water for about 10 minutes

To serve: Put the potatoes in the middle of a dinner plate. Then put the lamb chop on top followed by a layer of carrots. Drizzle the mint sauce around the plate. Garnish the carrots with parsley.

Herb Crusted Rack of Lamb with 'Bubble and Squash' served with a Kentish 'Double Vision' Cider and Redcurrant Jus

By James Dye winner of Kent Young Chef Award (YG9-11)

INGREDIENTS:

1 x single 'French Trimmed' Rack of English Lamb
3 x large shallots
4 x cloves garlic
½ x small squash (i.e. Acorn squash)
50ml olive oil
½ x head of greens
250ml 'Double Vision' Cider
2 x large potatoes (Maris Piper or similar old potato)
3 x 50g white breadcrumbs
500ml lamb stock
2 x teaspoon redcurrant jelly
100g butter
2 x sprigs fresh redcurrants (garnish)
4-5 sprigs fresh thyme
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper (season to taste)

METHOD:

Cut the lamb into two portions, retain the trimmings. Dependant on size of rack portions may be two or three boned. Peel shallots. Finely dice two, one roughly diced. Peel garlic cloves. Finely chop two, two left whole.

Place lamb trimmings, roughly diced shallot and whole garlic cloves in an oven proof pan. Place in pre-heated oven (200'c) for 10 minutes then stir ingredients to ensure the fat from the lamb coats other ingredients. Cook for a further 20 minutes or until lamb, onion/garlic are browned. Remove from oven and allow to cool slightly.

De-seed squash, season, sprinkle with olive oil and bake in same oven/temperature for 25-30 minutes or until tender. Remove from oven and allow to cool. Peel potatoes, dice into 1.5cm cubes, and place in pan cover in cold water. Bring to boil and simmer until tender. Drain and allow to cool.

Trim and wash greens, remove large stalks. Shred greens. Place pan on stove with cold water, bring to boil add greens. Return to boil, drain immediately in colander and allow to cool. Place pan on stove (containing lamb trimmings, shallots and garlic) add cider and stock, simmer and reduce liquid until approx 200ml. Add redcurrant jelly gently simmer until dissolved. Remove from heat.

Remove squash from skin, dice to similar size as potato. Add potatoes, seasoning, and a dessertspoon of olive oil. Add to a small greased roasting dish. Place in pre-heated oven 200°c for 20 minutes. Remove tray from oven add greens, stir well, drizzle with olive oil and return to oven for a further 15-20 minutes or until golden brown.

Place breadcrumbs, finely diced shallot and diced garlic into mixing bowl. Add fresh thyme leaves, seasoning. Melt 50g butter add to mixture and combine all ingredients. Heat a little olive oil in an ovenproof frying pan, brown lamb rack portions on all sides, season and cook for 15mins in a pre-heated oven 200°c.

Strain stock and cider reduction through a conical strainer into a small saucepan allow to settle and skim off any fat/oil. Heat gently and reduce until correct consistency is reached (coats back of spoon). Correct seasoning. Remove lamb from oven, allow to cool slightly. Carve each portion into two or three cutlets (dependant on size). Place cutlets on oven proof tray, coat one side of the cutlet with the crumb mixture. Gently brown the cutlets under a grill. Remove and keep warm.

Warm two large white plates, then spoon on two-three heaped dessertspoons of the bubble and squash, place two to three cutlets on each plate crust side up, spoon on jus (approximately two to three dessert spoons). Garnish with fresh redcurrants and thyme.



Sarah Orton/Jane Hagell
Account Directors
WAC PR & Marketing
T: 0845 370 7037
E: sarah@wac.uk.com
W: www.wac.uk.com

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Julie Monkman
Manager
Produced in Kent
T: 01732 853170
E: julie.monkman@producedinkent.co.uk
W: www.producedinkent.co.uk