

Organic Farm First for a ‘Taste of England’ Award

Low Sizergh Barn, an organic working farm with a shop, tea room, craft gallery and farm trail on the edge of the Lake District National Park in Cumbria has become the first organic farm to claim a silver award for Enjoy England’s ‘Taste of England Award’.

The Taste of England Award, ‘a national food tourism Oscar equivalent’, run by the tourist authority Enjoy England, is given to a business that provides an unbeatable food and drink experience. On Friday night (23rd), for the first time in the award’s 6-year history, a silver medal was given to an organic working farm.

Commenting on the win, Alison Park, of Low Sizergh Barn, said:

“This award means a great deal to everyone involved in our business as it is national recognition of the work we are all so passionate about; reconnecting people with food, farming and the countryside. From our own award winning Kendal Creamy cheese made from the farm’s organic milk to the wide range of local artisan produce on offer, you really can taste the difference. It’s all about good food produced with care and integrity.

“As a working farm we are the beating heart of a vibrant rural economy. Not only do we produce excellent food but we also maintain our distinctive countryside - the fields, hedges, walls, wildlife, and historic buildings. In its way this award is also testament to the massive progress that has been made in farm retailing in recent years, as seasonality, provenance and locality continue to grow in importance to food consumers.”

At Low Sizergh Barn the meat, poultry and game comes from nearby farms and estates and the seasonal, organic vegetables are delivered to the farm shop across the fields by wheel barrow, courtesy of the social enterprise and charity, Growing Well, which is based on the farm. The farm employs 60 full and part time staff and the family run business philosophy is that a properly run organic farm can enrich the lives and environment of the whole community and secure a vibrant rural economy for future generations.

The timing of the award comes on the back of recent research by food and grocery analyst IGD which said that nearly a third of shoppers were now specifically buying local goods, double the number in 2006. IGD’s research also said shoppers are motivated to buy food because they believe that locally produced food will be fresher, and has travelled less. Fifty-four per cent of people said that they wanted to support local producers and farmers, compared to only 28 per cent in 2006. The number of shoppers who said they bought local food to keep jobs in the area has more than quadrupled in that time too.

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The Taste Awards are open to all sectors of the tourism industry that create a taste experience and are committed to buying or producing local food. Low Sizergh Barn, one of three national nominations for this award, was judged to have demonstrated creativity in its use of local produce and to offer a first class customer service. The business, part of an organic dairy farm demonstrates a strong awareness and commitment to having a positive impact on the environment.

The winners were announced at an awards ceremony in Brighton on the evening of Friday 23 April. The gold award went to The Bildeston Crown in Suffolk. In previous years only two other farms have won a silver award – Yellingham Farm in Devon (2006) and Maynards Farm Bacon in Shropshire (2007).

Ends

For further information, including images and interviews with Alison Park, please contact Emma Dewhurst (015395 64193) or Alison on 07503152961.

Notes to editors

Four members of the family run the business. Mum Marjorie and daughter Alison look after the farm shop, gift and craft galleries and tearoom, whilst son Richard runs the farm and dad John jokes that he's now the farm boy sent to run all the errands. Richard's daughters Hannah and Emily have Saturday jobs in the tearoom and shop.

What you can find at Low Sizergh Barn: a farm trail through beautiful countryside around an organic dairy farm, speciality foods in the late 17th century barn farm shop, craft and gift galleries, an organic herd of 150 Holstein and Swedish Red cows, tearoom with a bird's eye view of milking at 1.15pm each day, 700 laying hens, an orchard re-established with historic local varieties of damsons, plums, apples and pears and Growing Well, a community enterprise providing mental health support, horticultural training, educational visits and crop shares.

Low Sizergh Barn has also won: National Trust Fine Farm Produce Award 2009, Organic Kendal Creamy Cheese and Organic Milk, Taste of England's Northwest Tourism Award 2009, Taste of Cumbria Award 2009 Cumbria Tourism, Rural Enterprise winner 2008, Farm Business Food & Farming Awards, Countryside Alliance, Best Rural Retailer Competition 2006, Highly Commended - Best Diversification category, Soil Association Organic Food Awards, Silver; Best Organic Dairy Farm 2006, Specialist Independent National Winner 2005, Dairy Crest & The Grocer Magazine Retail Cheese Awards

About the Enjoy England Awards for Excellence. The Enjoy England Awards for Excellence 2010 celebrate the best of English tourism and are in their 21st year. They promote healthy industry competition and high standards, helping to ensure England's place as a world-class destination. For more information about the awards and for a list of results visit: www.enjoyengland.com/excellence