

## **Britain's Best Cheese**

Britain's Best Cheese – Ashcombe a 'Lockdown Cheese' is Supreme Champion at 2021 Artisan Cheese Awards.

A cheese invented during lockdown has beaten off stiff competition from 600 cheeses from across the UK and Ireland to win the coveted title of Supreme Champion at this year's Artisan Cheese Awards. The cheese also won the titles of best English Cheese, Best New Cheese, Best Farmhouse Cheese and Best Washed Rind Cheese.

Ashcombe is produced by David Jowett, one of Britain's youngest cheesemakers, just barely 30 years old. It's a French Morbier style cheese which has the distinct ash layer running through the centre of the cheese. Receiving the awards at St Mary's Church in Melton Mowbray, famous for Stilton Cheese, David said "I wanted to support during lockdown the farmer that supplies me with my milk so created this cheese to help him use some of the milk that he would normally sell elsewhere."

At 30, young Jowett has had a meteoric rise to fame in the cheesemaker's world bursting on to the scene with his Rollright which again took Supreme Champion and a slew of other titles at the 2016 Artisan Cheese Awards. He had only started selling his cheese just 8 months before the event in August 2015.

New cheesemakers also did well with other awards; newly opened Balcombe Dairy (Blue Sky Cheese) which operates out of 4 containers on a farm won the Best Blue Cheese Class and Best Small Producer. Woodlands Dairy (Fresh Ewe Cheese) won Best Organic Cheese and Best Micro Producer and Homewood Cheese (Melbury) won Best Sheeps Cheese.

Traditional Dairies won their share of Awards; Montgomery's Cheddar winning Best Hard Cheese and Joint Supreme Champion Runner-Up. Keen's Cheddar won Best Territorial and Best PFN and Appleby's Smoked Best Flavoured Cheese.

Popular favourites Hampshire Cheese (Wigmore – Best Soft Cheese), Village Maid (Maida Vale – Best Cow's Cheese) and Cote Hill (Cote Hill Blue – Best Vegetarian) also featured.

The Irish sent over 155 cheeses from 31 dairies and won a slew of awards starting with Joint Supreme Champion Runner-Up for Galway and for Fermoy – both also Joint Best Irish Cheese. Galway Cheese's 'Galway Tom' won Best Goat and Best Semi-Soft Cheese while Fermoy Natural Cheese (St Gall) won Best Raw Milk Cheese.

Best Scottish Cheese went to St Andrew's Farmhouse Cheese (Anster) and Best Welsh Cheese to Cosyn Cymru for Brefu Bach.

The 600 cheeses were judged by 60 judges including buyers from Marks & Spencer, Tesco, Fine Cheese Co, Bradbury's, La Fromagerie, Neal's Yard, Paxton & Whitfield...

Sponsors: We're very grateful to the following sponsors..

Supreme Champion - The Fine Cheese Co  
Class 3: Hard Cheese - SMB College  
Class 9: Raw Milk Cheese - La Fromagerie

Class 11: Farmhouse - Bradbury's  
Class 12: Territorial - Harvey & Brockless  
Class 14: New Cheese - Neal's Yard

#### Notes

David Jowett - David was trained in culinary arts but switched to Cheesemaking after learning the craft at Ram Hall Dairy, famous its sheep's cheese Berkswell. He studied Cheesemaking at the School of Artisan Food on the Welbeck Estate in Nottinghamshire. He interned in nearby Stichelton, then at Neal's Yard and at Jasper Hill in Vermont, USA. After graduating, he returned to Paxton & Whitfield, cheesemongers to the Queen, for a period of time, and soon became cheesemaker for Gorsehill Abbey Farm in Worcestershire. He established the King Stone Dairy in Chedworth, Gloucestershire in 2015.

Ashcombe is inspired by Morbier, a classic French cheese from the Franche-Comté, and features a striking line of wood ash running through the centre of the cheese. Ashcombe is a large, flat, disc shaped cheese, 6kg, which is carefully washed in a special brine solution to develop a bright terracotta rind. The rind is meaty and savoury, while the paste has aromas of warm milk and hay. The flavours are comforting and rich, reminding us of melted butter and fresh hazelnuts. The cheese is aged for 2-4 months and is described as a washed rind, semi-hard pasteurised cow's milk cheese.

Classes : There are 16 Classes which include Soft, Semi-Soft, Hard, Blue, Cow, Sheep, Goat, Vegetarian, Raw Milk, Organic, Farmhouse, Territorial, Protected Food Name, New Cheese, Washed Rind, Flavoured.

Awards: Supreme Champion, Runner-Up Supreme Champion, Best English Cheese, Best Irish Cheese, Best Scottish Cheese, Best Welsh Cheese. Best Small Producer, Best Micro Producer.