

**Press Release**

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**Raymond Blanc OBE announces the winners of Coeliac UK's  
Gluten-free Chef of the Year competition**

Two Michelin starred chef Raymond Blanc OBE FIH, announced the winners of Coeliac UK's Gluten-free Chef of the Year Competition during a special presentation on 26 November 2009, at his award winning restaurant and hotel, Le Manoir aux Quat' Saisons in Oxfordshire.

This year's competition, which was run in association with the Institute of Hospitality, had two categories; Gluten-free Chef of the Year, for professional chefs and Up-and-Coming Gluten-free Chef of the Year, for catering students. The competition, to design a three course gluten-free meal, was launched earlier this year to raise awareness and highlight the need for increased provision of gluten-free menu options for the 1 in 100 people in the UK with coeliac disease.

The standard of entry was extremely high and following much debate by the judges taking into consideration a range of criteria including innovative use of gluten-free ingredients, seasonality and balance of flavours across the three course meal, it was decided that Peter McKenzie from Scotland was chosen as the Gluten-free Chef of the Year and student Shanice Parris as the Up-and-Coming Gluten-free Chef of the Year.

Mr McKenzie, head chef for South Lanarkshire Council works over three kitchens at the council headquarters catering for everything from breakfasts to buffets and banquets. He impressed the judges with his delicate, innovated touches throughout his three course menu comprising of pan seared fillet of red mullet, breast of pheasant with wild mushroom polenta and vanilla and basil panacotta with balsamic roasted strawberries. He wins a one week placement at Gleneagles with twice Michelin Star chef, Andrew Fairlie.

Shanice Parris, from Southampton is in her first year studying catering at Westminster Kingsway College and proved to the judges that she has a bright future with her menu of pan seared scallops, roasted lamb cutlets and dark chocolate teardrop mousse incorporating modern twists on traditional recipes. She wins a one week placement at The Vineyard, Stockcross.

Runners up in the competition were Candice Webber the Head Chef at St. Paul's Cathedral Restaurant for the Gluten-free Chef of the Year and Daniel Beech who has just completed his NVQ2 and apprenticeship at the Chester Grosvenor in the Up-and-Coming Gluten-free Chef of the Year category. They both received a set of knives kindly supplied by 3663 and Sodexo. All four winners were also presented with a signed copy of Raymond Blanc's latest cookery book.

Raymond Blanc, supported the recipe competition and judged the entries: "I was really impressed by the quality and attention to detail displayed in the entries for this competition and congratulations to all the winners! With a little thought and innovative use of gluten-free ingredients, a wide range of both sweet and savoury recipes can be created by anyone, which are not only delicious but also suitable for people with coeliac disease to eat."

“Each of my businesses has for a long time been catering for people with coeliac disease and I hope more restaurateurs will do the same. Although more common than many people realise, gluten intolerance is not taken seriously enough by far too many chefs. We all need a few really good gluten-free recipes in our repertoire and I hope that more restaurateurs will understand the importance of, and gain an aptitude for, having tasty, interesting gluten-free options on their menus,” he continued.

Sarah Sleet, Chief Executive of Coeliac UK, the national charity for people with coeliac disease, said: “We are really grateful to Raymond Blanc for all his support and for highlighting the needs of people on a gluten-free diet. He is showing the way for others in the catering industry by providing added choice and piece of mind for people with coeliac disease when dining out.”

“In the current economic climate every penny counts and there is an untapped market for the hospitality industry worth at least an estimated £100 million a year by providing safe, gluten-free options for people with coeliac disease. Statistics show that nearly three quarters of people with coeliac disease want to eat out a minimum of once every fortnight, but only around a third do because of a lack of safe gluten-free options available. When you consider that this is a growing population of around 600,000 people, all likely to dine with at least two others, then you can see the potential financial benefits for catering businesses,” she added.

Coeliac disease is not a food allergy; it is an autoimmune disease caused by intolerance to gluten. Damage to the gut lining occurs when gluten is eaten. There is no cure or medication for the condition; the only treatment is life-long adherence to a strict gluten-free diet. At least 1 in 100 people in the UK has coeliac disease; so for the hundreds of thousands of people in the UK, being careful about what they eat is an essential way of life. Without a gluten-free diet, the disease can lead to other conditions, such as malnutrition, osteoporosis, infertility problems and also can cause bowel cancer.

Coeliac UK has recently launched a catering toolkit which provides useful tips and advice for people catering for people with coeliac disease. More details can be found at: <http://www.coeliac.org.uk/food-industry>.

Recipes will soon be available to download from the Charity’s website at:

<http://www.coeliac.org.uk/news/glutenfreechefoftheyear>

Ends

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**Notes to editors:**

- The Institute of Hospitality is the hospitality industry's professional management body which has been promoting excellence and facilitating learning for over 70 years
- 1 in 100 people in the UK has coeliac disease.
- Members of Coeliac UK receive an annual Food and Drink Directory, which lists thousands of foods people with coeliac disease can eat.
- Gluten is a protein found in wheat (including spelt), rye and barley; beer; obvious sources of gluten include breads, pastas, flours, cereals, cakes and biscuits. It is often used as an ingredient in many favourite foods such as fish fingers, sausages, gravies, sauces and soy sauce. People with coeliac disease can also be sensitive to oats.
- The symptoms of coeliac disease range from mild to severe and can vary between individuals. Not everyone with coeliac disease experiences gut related symptoms; any area of the body can be affected.
- Symptoms can include bloating, abdominal pain, nausea, constipation, diarrhoea, wind, tiredness, anaemia, headaches, mouth ulcers, recurrent miscarriages, weight loss (but not in all cases), skin problems, depression, joint or bone pain and nerve problems.
- Around 1000 newly diagnosed people are joining Coeliac UK every month. For further details on Membership please call the helpline on 08453052060, further information can be found at [www.coeliac.org.uk](http://www.coeliac.org.uk)