

Crowds flock to the festival by the seaside: Burnham on Sea Food & Drink Festival

Crowds of over 10000 thronged the streets of Burnham on Sea yesterday for their 5th food and drink festival. The festival is focused on local producers and with it's over 90 traders it has rapidly become the biggest food and drink event in Somerset.

Festival director Beverley Milner Simonds told us

"It is great to see the town centre full of happy visitors and locals enjoying a mild autumn day and a fantastic range of food and drink. The festival is a joy to put on when we get such positive feedback from visitors and traders. We aim to put on a high quality event that includes something for anyone who is hungry or thirsty!"

Fellow Festival Director Sarah Milner Simonds continued

"We made the decision to moved to the autumn festival to the start of half term to work with the local holiday parks and those arriving in the south west for a break with friends and family.

Talking to visitors around the festival there were people from the Home Counties, London, Manchester and the Midlands as well as a lot of locals enjoying a day-long free day out."

The festival which started in 2012 has expanded to include three large street markets, 5 indoor venues, a demo stage, competitions, live music and is now strengthening its links with the farming community by including livestock and farm machinery.

Many visitors stayed all day and the festival organisers are going to look at a shopping creche to help out next year. Part of the day long appeal is the sheer number of traders to see. Mayor Martin Cox told us

"I was asked to judge the Best in Show competition and it took me over 3 hours to visit every trader. It is great to have Burnham on Sea put on the map for all the right reasons."

The KDS Fresh Ideas Stage saw chefs tempt taste buds and teach us a few new tricks using game. Supported by the Taste of Game campaign, local chefs were cooking throughout the day.

There were 4 free competitions during the day and the first to announce their winners was the Great Burnham Brew-Off. Graham Holland was crowned Champion Brewer by sponsor Balliihoo for his Damson and

Bullace Gin.

Next up was a new competition at the festival - a Hot Wings Challenge hosted by the Clifton Chilli Club and supported by Passion & Soul BBQ. Together they cooked up 12 very, very hot wings and 10 competitors tried to clean them down to the bone the fastest. Local, visitors and festival Director Sarah fought against the extreme heat and Martin Palmer was crowned winner.

Hot on the heels of the wings was The Great Burnham Burn-Off. A very popular competition with the audience of over 1000 and they saw an epic battle our wills with last years champion Marc Brion in a head-to-head with Chris Williams. They both eat the world's hottest chilli, the Carolina Reaper - twice (!) and then fought it out in a speed eating challenge. Marc narrowly pipped Chris but the sponsors Hallmark Tattoos were so impressed they offered both competitors the opportunity of a free tattoo. The festival organisers and competitors all thanked Riverford Organics for the milk - the quickest way to cool the heat.

The large audience then headed over to Somerset Skills & Learning to see the judges award the trophies in The Great Burnham Bake-Off. Local baker Dusica Roberts was crowned professional champion for a stunning autumnal carrot cake with a blown leaves scene. Other winners were Kate Heapey as the Champion Individual baker, The Winstones in the family class and Trish Maunder in the Technical Challenge. Regular entrant and familiar local face Steve Bird was rewarded with a winners certificate for his gluten free bread, which he claimed was "beginners luck".

The food and drink festival will return to the streets of Burnham on Sea on Saturday 23 May 2014.

ENDS

Contact: Beverley Milner Simonds 07973 378735

Images: All credited to Marcus Smith

2183 - Kate Heapey and sponsor Alex Turco of Positive Wealth Creation Ltd

2152 - Winning professional entry from Dusica Roberts

2049 - James from Somerset Charcuterie

1972 - VPC Catering - local jerk chicken - a sell out on the day

1900 - Louise Duck from the Upton Chilli Company

1863 - British made New Holland tractor from Hawkins Agri of Bridgwater