



Press Release

FreeFrom Food Awards 2022

Winners Announced at Gala Presentation, Friday 28th October

The FreeFrom Food Awards Ireland 2022 Presentations took place on Friday 28th October, with over 40 categories announced at a gala ceremony which marked the 7th year of the awards, at The Grand Hotel, Malahide, Co. Dublin.

“After a tough few years for every business in Ireland, we are absolutely delighted to be able to announce these awards in person. We gathered the freefrom community in force for the first time in three years, with a fantastic celebration of all our winners,” says John Burke, founder of the FreeFrom Food Awards Ireland (FFFAI). “We have an extremely strong winners list, with everything freefrom consumers need to shop and eat safely.”

Judging took place over several weeks in September, with over 400 entries going before the FFFAI panels. “Our judges are very discerning and passionate about the process. Freefrom is different from other awards processes because as well as taste, ingredients, texture, aroma – the usual measures – you have to also judge the freefrom aspect of the product. Is it meeting a gap in the market? Is it helping someone who would be missing out otherwise? That aspect is essential,” says Burke. “It gives rise to great debate!”

The FreeFrom Food Awards assembles judging panels from various backgrounds, including coeliacs, dietitians, parents of freefrom children, nutritionists, chefs, bakers and bloggers. “We have built a strong panel of return judges and every year we are delighted to welcome new ones to the FFFAI. For freefrom consumers, being involved in the awards is a great way to see what’s on the market that they may not be aware of. It’s also a super way to champion the products you love and to make sure manufacturers are awarded for their efforts, so they keep providing these important products,” Burke says. “Judges can award a Gold, Silver, Bronze or Merit



in each category and we ask them to look at the technical aspect, the ingredients, the freefrom-ness as well as whether it tastes good!"

With entries from the 32 counties the growth of the freefrom area continues in Ireland, as manufacturers respond to gluten free, dairy free and wheat free among the 14 allergens which limit consumer's diets.

Other awards given included the FreeFrom Champion Award, sponsored by Juvela, a stalwart freefrom supplier for many years. "This year's FreeFrom Champion is a woman whose family was faced with an uncertain future plus family health issues. A lifelong interest in food and health led to the setting up of a bakery in their milking parlour. Out of that interest a brand was born and developed, catering to the freefrom market," says Anna Marsden, of Juvela. "Despite the fact that the bakery burnt down, they picked themselves up and went on to continue to produce products that were gluten free, wheat free, dairy free or vegan. We are delighted that the FreeFrom Champion award goes to Siobhan Lawless, of the Foods of Athenry. Siobhan certainly represents what this award stands for. Along with her family, she has put her heart and soul into creating delicious food so that the freefrom community can enjoy great food too."

Product of the Year was awarded to McDonnells for their Food Service Roast Gravy. "This is a product that is currently available in catering, servicing the freefrom market in a restaurant setting. It's vegetarian, yet you'd never know, showing technical know-how and it tastes so good that our judges were actually drinking it out of ramekins," says John Burke. Product Range of the Year went to O'Donnell's Crisps, who continue to be innovative in their use of flavours, their marketing and which never let you down on quality; they are described by FFFAI judges as the best crisps in Ireland. Retailer of the Year went to Aldi, for the third year running, for their continued consistency in store, for quality and price and for developing constantly in the freefrom arena, so that consumers continue to be excited going into stores. An Innovation award went Koka Silk Gluten Free Rice Noodles, for being versatile, portable and handy, as well as tasty and filling.



Kids' Choice, which is voted for by a panel of kid judges, was dominated by chicken! Rosie & Jim's took double gold for their Chicken Kiev and Southern Fried Chicken Goujons, in a move that surprised the parents of the panel, showing that our kid judges have very sophisticated palettes. Former kids' panel chair, Lucy Hutchinson, who has coeliac disease, appealed to producers to remember that no child wants to eat salad and that *they* are the future customers of freefrom. Parent's Choice was won by SuperValu, who took Gold for their Chicken Kiev, with Aldi coming in Silver for their Gluten Free Breaded Chicken Fillet Goujons. Mash Direct's Carrot & Parsnip and Aldi's Spaghetti both took Bronzes.

Finally, the Lisa Action Memorial Award, in memory of the late co-founder of the Awards, who was known for her passion for small producers. The Lisa Acton Small Producer of the Year Award went to Clonakilty Gluten Free Kitchen, who were a first time entrant, winning eight awards in total and wowing the judges throughout, with the amazing quality and taste of their products.

"Congratulations to all of our winners," says John Burke. "Being a team that includes two coeliacs plus a diabetic, we are very grateful for and passionate about the development and growth of freefrom. For ourselves and for all freefrom consumers, whether adult or child. We continue to call for ongoing improvement and innovation and look forward to awarding all those efforts to keep us healthy."

The FreeFrom Food Awards took place in Ireland in 2016 for the first time, with many brands benefiting from the opportunity to herald their products as award winning.

Gold, Silver and Bronze awards are granted, along with a Merit badge for products still considered high quality by the judges. Winners may display the relevant badge on their packaging, which helps consumers wading through freefrom sections to discern which products are best. Categories are diverse from pasta to ready meals, cakes to crisps and bread products to breakfast cereals.

Ends



Freefrom Food Awards Ireland was established independently by John Burke, founder of GFLife. The FreeFrom Food Awards, started in the UK in 2007, being the only industry awards for FreeFrom foods, by FoodsMatter and FreeFrom Foods Matter. Having been a judge at the UK FreeFrom Food Awards for over 7 years, John adapted the awards format for an Irish setting. This is the seventh year.

For further information:

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Winner's List available on www.ffa.ie or contact johnb@ffa.ie | emma@expresspr.ie