

Food & Drink



OAKLANDS COLLEGE

SPONSORED BY OAKLANDS COLLEGE
New state-of-the-art kitchens and restaurant
now open on St Albans campus.
Unlock your potential!

Blog: thelocalfoodie.wordpress.com

Becky Alexander is on the hunt for the finest local produce

Young talent cook up quality cuisine

One of my favourite local events is the Young Chef of the Year competition held at Oaklands College. This year it moved to February from October to give schools more time to enter and we had a fantastic response. The competition is open to all aspiring chefs in years 9, 10 and 11 and we had a very high standard of entries from almost every school in the district.

The young chefs enter either a starter, main course or pud and send in their recipe. The tutors at Oaklands shortlist the entries and finalists are invited to the college to cook in the professional training kitchens.

The kids make everything from scratch, from pastry to soufflés and judging this year were Andrei Lussmann, myself, and St Albans Mayor Cllr Geoff Harrison.

We awarded marks for presentation, flavour and culinary skills. The college tutors advised us on how the students had worked in the kitchen, adding points for difficulty.

We were very impressed with the

starter finalists – seafood was the most popular choice with lobster, prawns and scallops featuring.

All the bread and pasta served was made from scratch and a great deal of technical skill was shown with presentation being very good in this category.

Talia Cherkez, 15, was highly commended for her delicious aubergine stack which she served with a bread twist and pesto sauce. Our winner was Terence Dobson, 13, from Achmole Academy with a beautifully presented lobster ravioli. We later found out that Terence had been a finalist on *Junior Masterchef*; he evidently has a good future ahead of him.

Main courses was a tough group with more entries than any other. Tasty curries, jambalayas and home-made pasta were the most popular choices perhaps reflecting what the students like to cook at home for their families.

Florence Tyrntania, 13, was highly commended for her Asian salmon fishcakes and sweet soy pickles and wasabi mayo, which showcased her range of skills.

The winner was Lauren Telling, 15, from Chancellors School for her



■ Lauren Telling, Young Chef of the Year Mia Taylor and Terence Dobson with the judges

beautifully presented hoi an chicken in banana leaf which came with spiced rice and a salad; a well-balanced dish.

Restaurateur Andrei Lussmann praised the chefs in this category for embracing international flavours and reminded them that we do have wonderful produce and recipes in the British Isles; I wonder if we might see more of those next year.

The desserts were the best as a

group that we have seen in the years of the competition. All were beautifully presented and could have been served in a restaurant. Highly commended was Ronaldo Myers, 15, from Freirn Barnet School with his light chocolate soufflé and ganache. The winner was Mia Taylor, 14, from Sele School with a deconstructed vanilla cheesecake wrapped in dried raspberries with lemon shortbreads.

All the finalists were presented with certificates from the Mayor and winners also won £100 vouchers.

The judges were unanimous in awarding Mia Taylor Young Chef of the Year for her sophisticated cooking and for winning in a very tough group.

Mia also wins dinner for her family at Lussmann's and a day at Thompson @ Darcy's cooking with owner Phil Thompson.

It was fantastic to see so many committed, talented students at work, many of whom were just 13. I do hope they all continue with their cooking, whether at home or to a professional level.

Previous finalists have gone on to study at Oaklands and I was interested to hear that one of the Oaklands students, Harry Lumsden, is now working at Marcus Wareing at the Berkeley, having previously worked at St Michael's Manor.

I hope that having the chance to work in a professional kitchen will show the students that it can be a good career choice – I look forward to hearing what these talented chefs do next.

We've turned
another page...



Visit our cosy new premises on historic Holywell Hill for the same friendly, knowledgeable service you'd expect.

Sheet Music for all instruments
Music sourcing service available

Family owned and run
for over 55 years

38 Holywell Hill,
St Albans, Herts AL1 1DD

Tel: 01727 852717

Email: stalbanmusic@live.co.uk

...come and be part of
the new movement