

Terms and Conditions– April 2025

General Rules

1. All decisions of the organisers and judging panel are final. Organisers, judges, promoters, and sponsors will not enter into any correspondence or discussion regarding any decision made or on the merits or otherwise of any entry. Organisers reserve the right to disqualify any entry which is deemed to be against the rules or against the spirit of the rules.
2. The organisers, judges or sponsors of the awards cannot accept responsibility for the validity of claims made by entrants, although care will be taken to verify details provided.
3. The organisers reserve the right to amend the judging criteria/terms and conditions if deemed necessary but will remain within the spirit of the published criteria/t&cs.
4. The organisers' decision on whether a location (home or business address, production on facility, factory address etc.) is within the county of Northamptonshire is final. Locations will be verified using the organisers' mapping system; postcodes and postal addresses outside Northamptonshire will not be the determining factor.
5. The final decision on which category an entry falls under will be made by the organisers at their sole decision on within the spirit of these rules. The essence of the venue/product/drink/ menu entered will be the determining factor.
6. The organisers' decision as to whether or not an entry meets the spirit of the rules is final and no correspondence will be entered into nor appeal possible.
7. No entry into a category will be accepted from a Gold recipient of that category last year. However, there is no bar to a 2025/26 Gold recipient entering a different category; the exception is in the product categories where an immediate past Gold recipient in either the Artisan Local Product or the Artisan Vegetarian/Vegan Product category may not enter the other product categories.
8. All entries from businesses in (Booker Gastro Pub, World Cuisine Restaurant, Artisan Local Product, Artisan Local Vegetarian/Vegan Product, Artisan Local Drink, One To Watch, Community Café, Weetabix Sustainability, Restaurant of the Year, Healthy Food & Wellbeing) must contain the registered business number (from Companies House), or registered charity number (if applicable).
9. All venues participating in the World Cuisine Restaurant, Community Café, F&B Achiever, Healthy Food and Wellbeing Workplace, and Local Food Hero (where applicable) categories must hold a Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) score of 4 (Good) or above at time of entry. Similarly, the venues/companies (as appropriate) of those participating in the Chef and Booker Young Chef categories must hold an FHRS of 4 (Good) or above.
10. All venues participating in the Booker Gastro Pub, Restaurant categories must hold a Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) score of 4 (Good) or above at time of entry.

11. All entries from individuals (Artisan Local Drink, Artisan Local Product, Artisan Local Vegetarian/Vegan Product, F&B Achiever, One To Watch, Local Food Hero, Whitco Chef, Booker Young Chef, Food and Drink College Student) must contain valid proof that the individual is legally entitled to live and/or work in the UK, and that the person lives or works in Northamptonshire.
12. A business/individual can put a maximum of three entries into any of the product needed for each entry.
13. The same product may not be entered into more than one category.
14. Where a business/individual produces products and drinks, they may also enter F&B Achiever, One To Watch, or the Healthy Food and Wellbeing Award and/or be nominated for Local Food Hero.
15. Businesses and individuals can enter any number of categories, as long as:-
 - a. they meet the necessary entry criteria of each category; and,
 - b. they complete a valid entry form for each entry; and,
 - c. the entries are not mutually exclusive. If an entrant meets the requirements for a category, then they may enter that category, for example:
 - an eatery may enter either Booker Gastro Pub or Restaurant of the Year, or Event Venue of the Year, and also be eligible for Local Food Hero, or F&B Achiever.
 - a food producer may enter the Artisan Local Product AND F&B Achiever of the Year, or One To Watch categories AND be nominated for the Local Food Hero, however, a person/business cannot enter both the F&B Achiever and the One To Watch categories.
16. The organisers and the judges are impartial. Any attempt to influence the judges or the judging process in favour of, or against, any entrant will result in the disqualification of the appropriate entry. The judges' decision on this is final and there is no appeal.
17. Sponsors support the awards through the judging process and therefore may not submit an entry. The organiser's decision is final.

Confidentiality

18. The application form and all supporting material will become the property of the organisers and cannot be returned to entrants.
19. Other than as is necessary to run and publicise the awards, all material submitted will be treated with the strictest of confidence. Whilst every care will be taken, no responsibility can be taken for the loss or damage of submitted material.
20. Entries will be checked to ensure that they meet the relevant Trading Standards or

Environmental Health legislation and details of entries will be passed to the relevant Local Authority to disclose to the organisers and judges any relevant significant history, complaints, or breaches of relevant Regulations or law.

21. What constitutes relevant significant history, complaints, or breaches of relevant regulations or law will be determined by the relevant local Trading Standards Department, or the relevant Environmental Health Department.
22. The organisers will determine what action to take as a result of any such disclosure.
23. Nothing in these Terms and Conditions will prevent the relevant enforcement authority from taking any action, they deem necessary as a result of a serious breach.
24. Comments made by judges or members of the public (whether in the shortlisting, mystery shopping, public tasting, the final judging, or otherwise) are confidential and will not be released by the organisers, subject to the following rules.
25. On request, organisers will provide general feedback to entrants which are not shortlisted in the form of a short-written analysis, based on the entry form, supporting materials, and the shortlisting.
26. If required, organisers will provide more detailed oral feedback to finalists in the form of an analysis based on the entry form, supporting materials, the shortlisting, and the final judging.
27. The result of the competition will be kept confidential until the Awards Celebration and any attempt to ascertain the result beforehand may result in the disqualification of the appropriate entry.

Publicity

28. By signing or submitting an entry, all entrants agree to participate in awards-related publicity.
29. In each category, only the details of those entrants which are shortlisted will be made public.
30. The organisers reserve the right to use recordings, film, and photographs taken at the shortlisting, the cook-offs, public tastings and the Awards Celebration and to use any non-confidential material supplied by applicants for promotional purposes.
31. Entrants who are selected as finalists may be asked at a later stage to prepare/produce further details or information to promote the Awards.
32. All publicity generated by entrants, finalists and winners must refer to the awards as the “Weetabix Northamptonshire Food and Drink Awards”, or the “Weetabix Northamptonshire”.

33. The Weetabix Northamptonshire Food and Drink Awards logo will be provided to finalists for use in their publicity, on menus, on packaging, on leaflets etc. Any variation from the official wording or logo must be agreed with the organisers in advance. Failure to adhere to this rule may result in disqualification from the 2025/26 awards competition, or the competition in subsequent years.

Category Specific Rules

Artisan Local Drink of the Year

- a. The closing date for entries is 5pm on 9th May 2025
- b. Entries are open only to businesses which produce a drink that is:-
 - made using raw materials grown and supplied from a farm in Northamptonshire; and/or,
 - made predominantly using raw materials produced or grown in Northamptonshire; and/or,
 - made in a production facility within Northamptonshire. and,
 - whose registered headquarters are in Northamptonshire
- c. The drink submitted must have been on sale to the public at the time of entry and is reasonably expected to remain on sale until after 1st January 2026.
- d. The drink submitted must be “as supplied to the public”/“as sold” and must not be modified or enhanced in any way. The organisers retain the right to make commercial/retail purchases of drinks entered and substitute these for the entered items at their sole discretion.
- e. Businesses can enter any number of categories, as long as they meet the necessary entry criteria of each category.
- f. There is an overall entry maximum of three drinks per business in respect of this category.

Artisan Local Product of the Year and Artisan Local Vegetarian / Vegan Product of the Year

- a. The closing date for entries is 5pm on 9th May 2025
- b. Entries are open only to businesses which produce a product that is:-
 - made using raw materials grown and supplied from a farm in Northamptonshire; and/or,
 - made predominantly using raw materials produced or grown in Northamptonshire; and/or,
 - made in a production facility within Northamptonshire. and,
 - whose registered headquarters are in Northamptonshire
- c. The product submitted must be on sale to the public at the time of entry and is reasonably expected to remain on sale until after 1st January 2026.
- d. The product submitted must be “as supplied to the public”/“as sold” and must not be modified or enhanced in any way. The organisers retain the right to make commercial/retail purchases of products entered and substitute these for the entered items at their sole discretion.
- e. Businesses can enter any number of categories, as long as they meet the necessary entry criteria of each category.
- f. In the case of the Artisan Local Vegetarian / Vegan Product of the Year category, the

products must be actively marketed as being vegetarian / vegan, not simply that their ingredients make them vegetarian/vegan.

- g. There is an overall entry maximum of three products per business per product category, with a total of six entries across all of these categories.

Booker Gastro Pub of the Year / Restaurant of the Year

- a. Participation in this category is through direct register of interest from the venue itself or by inclusion in a list of venues recommended to the organisers through nomination or other external sources.
- b. The closing date for registering interest is 20th June 2025.
- c. The category is open only to pubs and restaurants in Northamptonshire.
- d. The venue must hold an FHRS score of 4 (Good) or above at time of entry.
- e. All registered/recommended venues will be put forward through a preliminary selection process which may involve telephone or online research in order to identify a longlist. Venues will be informed if they have been longlisted and, in the case of those venues which did not enter directly, will be invited to proceed further in the competition. Those venues which do not wish to proceed will be removed from the competition.
- f. All longlisted entries (unless otherwise having elected not to proceed) will be visited by Mystery Shoppers (stage 1) who will not reveal their identity. The cost of the meal/meals will be picked up by the Mystery Shoppers.
- g. Mystery Shopping – stage 1 may take place at any time during the venue's normal service between the date of longlisting and the date of shortlisting in July. Venues will be provided with Mystery Shopping feedback upon request after the conclusion of the Awards year.
- h. Following the shortlisting, each finalist will be Mystery Shopped (stage2) separately by at least two members of the expert panel, who may be accompanied. The Mystery Shoppers will identify themselves at the end of the meal and will pay for any drinks taken. The cost of the meals (two meals for each visit) will be subsidised by the entrant.
- i. Mystery Shopping – stage 2 may take place at any time during each finalist's normal service (excluding a 'themed night'). Finalists will be advised of the period when this will happen.
- j. The identity of Mystery Shoppers must not be revealed by entrants until after the Awards Celebration, unless already published by the organisers.
- k. More details of the judging process, including the criteria used by the first and second stage Mystery Shoppers, are detailed at the end of this document.
- l. There will only be 1 Gold Award winner.
- m. You may only enter 1 dining category per venue.

World Cuisine Restaurant of the Year

- a. Participation in this category is through direct register of interest from the venue itself or by inclusion in a list of venues recommended to the organisers through nomination or other external sources.
- b. The closing date for registering interest is 20th June 2025.
- c. The category is open only to World Cuisine Restaurants in Northamptonshire
- d. The restaurant must hold an FHRS score of 4 (Good) or above at time of entry.

- e. For the purpose of this competition, a World Cuisine Restaurant is defined as a venue whose menu offers predominantly international cuisine – excluding European Cuisine – for example South East Asian, South American, Caribbean, Chinese or Japanese – and which serves food freshly prepared on the premises to visiting customers and where it is not possible to buy and consume alcohol without food.
- f. All registered/recommended venues will be put forward through a preliminary selection process which will involve telephone or online research in order to identify a longlist. Venues will be informed if they have been longlisted and, in the case of those venues which did not enter directly, will be invited to proceed further in the competition. Those venues which do not wish to proceed will be removed from the competition.
- g. All longlisted entries (unless otherwise having elected not to proceed) will be visited by Mystery Shoppers (stage 1) who will not reveal their identity. The cost of the meal/meals will be picked up by the Mystery Shoppers.
- h. Mystery Shopping– (stage1) may take place at any time during the venue’s normal service between the date of longlisting and the date of shortlisting in July. Venues will be provided with Mystery Shopping feedback upon request after the Awards Dinner.
- i. Following the shortlisting, each finalist will be Mystery Shopped (stage 2) separately by at least two members of the expert panel, who may be accompanied. The Mystery Shoppers will identify themselves at the end of the meal and will pay for any drinks taken. The cost of the meals (two meals on each visit) will be subsidised by the entrant.
- j. Mystery Shopping – (stage 2) may take place at any time during each finalist’s normal service (excluding a ‘themed night’). Finalists will be advised of the period when this will happen.
- k. The identity of Mystery Shoppers must not be revealed by entrants until after the Awards Celebration, unless already published by the organisers.
- l. More details of the judging process, including the criteria used by the first and second Stage Mystery Shoppers, are detailed at the end of this document.
- m. There will only be 1 Gold Award winner.

Chef of the Year

- a. The closing date for entries is 6th June 2025.
- b. Entries are open only to Chefs aged 25 or over (at 7th June 2025) who are legally entitled to live and / or work in the UK, and who:-
 - work in a food business based Northamptonshire.
- c. The business at which the entrant is employed must hold an FHRS score of 4 (Good) or above at time of entry.
- d. The business at which the entrant is employed must be open to the public.
- e. Entrants must provide evidence of employment at a food business based in Northamptonshire. Individuals may enter only once. However, up to five chefs from any one business may enter.
- f. Entrants have to submit a recipe for a signature dish. There should be a Northamptonshire local food theme to the menu. The menu must be devised by the entrant and dishes must not feature on the menu of the entrant’s business.
- g. The organisers’ decision on whether or not a menu qualifies will be final and binding, and there will be no correspondence, discussion or appeal.
- h. All ingredients used must be approved for use in the UK and be commercially available (or from the entrant’s own garden).

- i. For the final cook-off, finalists will be provided with a basket of ingredients from which they will have to devise, cost, prepare, and present a two course meal (starter and main or main and pudding) for two people on a budget. It will feature Northamptonshire produce. You will be invited to bring 1 item of table top equipment you cannot work without and crockery you wish to plate your dishes on.
- j. Finalists will have:-
- up to fifteen minutes for the awards team to check paperwork – no cooking or preparation will be allowed during this time;
 - thirty minutes to decide what to cook and how and to submit the menu to the organising team – no cooking or preparation will be allowed during this time;
 - up to fifteen minutes to orient themselves in the kitchen and set up any equipment – no cooking or preparation will be allowed during this time;
 - during this forty five minutes of preparation, finalists will be allowed access to cookery books only (no electronic devices) which will be removed prior to the countdown; with two hours precisely to prepare and cook the dishes on the menu plan produced.
 - No cooking or preparation is permitted before the official start time for the cook-off, and no cooking, serving, or presentational changes may be made after the end of the cook-off.
- k. The final cook-off will be held at one time only on 8th July. Any entrant who cannot attend will be disqualified and their place may be offered to another entrant at the organisers' sole discretion.
- l. The cook-off will take place in controlled circumstances and no-one other than the individual finalists, the judges, the awards team, and the awards team's official photographer and media team will be present during the cook-off. Only the judges and the awards team will be present during the final judging.
- m. Finalists will be advised at the earliest opportunity if the details of the above cook-off change and may withdraw from the competition at that stage if they wish, without prejudice.

Booker Young Chef of the Year

- a. The closing date for entries is 6th June 2025.
- b. Entries are open only to Chefs who are aged between 16 and 24 (at 6th June 2025) and
- who are legally entitled to live and / or work in the UK, and:-
 - work in a food business based in Northamptonshire
- c. The business at which the entrant is employed must hold an FHRs score of 4 (Good) or above at time of entry.
- d. The business at which the entrant works must be open to the public.
- e. Entrants must provide evidence of employment at a food business based Northamptonshire.
- f. Individuals may enter only once. However, up to five young chefs from any one business may enter.
- g. Entrants have to submit a menu plan for a main course for two people with costings. There should be a Northamptonshire local food theme to the menu.
- h. The menu must be devised by the entrant and dishes must not feature on the menu of the entrant's business.
- i. The organisers' decision on whether or not a menu qualifies will be final and binding, and

there will be no correspondence, discussion or appeal.

- j. All ingredients used must be approved for use in the UK and be commercially available (or from the entrant's own garden).
- k. Finalists will be provided with a basket of key Northamptonshire ingredients from which they will have to devise, cost, prepare and present a main course for two people. You may bring 2 identical items of crockery to plate your dish on. Details of the ingredients will not be provided in advance. Finalists will have:-
 - up to 15 minutes for the awards team to check paperwork – no cooking or preparation will be allowed during this time;
 - thirty minutes to decide what to cook and how and to submit the menu to the organising team – no cooking or preparation will be allowed during this time;
 - fifteen minutes to orient themselves in the kitchen and set up any equipment – no cooking or preparation will be allowed during this time;
 - during this first forty-five minutes of preparation, finalists will be allowed access to cookery books only (no electronic devices) which will be removed before the cook off starts.
 - two hours precisely to prepare and cook the dishes from their menu plan entry.
- l. No cooking or preparation is permitted before the official start time for the cook-off, and no cooking, serving, or presentational changes may be made after the end of the cook-off.
- m. The final cook-off will be held at one time only on 10th July. Any entrant who cannot attend will be disqualified and their place may be offered to another entrant at the organisers' sole discretion.
- n. The cook-off will take place in controlled circumstances and no-one other than the individual finalists, the judges, the awards team, and the awards team's official photographer and media team will be present during the cook-off. Only the judges and the awards team will be present during the final judging.
- o. Finalists will be advised at the earliest opportunity if the details of the above cook-off change and may withdraw from the competition at that stage if they wish, without prejudice.

F&B Achiever of the Year

- a. Participation in this category is through public nomination or direct entry.
- b. Entries are open only to those employed in, or volunteer in, businesses in Northamptonshire.
- c. Members of the public will be invited to nominate their F&B Achiever of the Year. The closing date for nominations is 11th July 2025.
- d. Alternatively, participants may enter directly by completing an entry form. Again, the closing date for submission of the completed entry form is 11th July 2025.
- e. Shortlisting of finalists will be based on:-
 - the quality of the entry form
 - the number and quality of the nomination(s) received (as appropriate)
- f. Each entrant will be advised if they have been selected as a finalist.
- g. Each finalist will be interviewed on a chosen date 4th September to secure further information in support of their entry and a panel of judges will discuss the results of those interviews and take into account the results of the shortlisting before determining who should receive Gold, Silver or Bronze. If an entrant is aware that they are unable to attend the interview, either at the time of their entry or later, they are to advise the Awards team

at the earliest opportunity.

One to Watch

- a. Participation in this category is through direct entry.
- b. Entries are open only to those employed in, or volunteer in, businesses in Northamptonshire.
- c. The closing date for entries is 11th July 2025.
- d. Entry is only open to a food and/or drink manufacturer less than five years old at the closing date, but more than 1 year old?
- e. Shortlisting of finalists will be based on:-
 - the quality of the entry form
 - the number and quality of the nomination(s) received (as appropriate)
- f. Each entrant will be advised if they have been selected as a finalist.
- g. Each finalist will be interviewed on a chosen date (morning of 9th September 2025) to secure further information in support of their entry and a panel of judges will discuss the results of those interviews and take into account the results of the shortlisting before selecting a winner and runner-up (or runners-up). If an entrant is aware that they are unable to attend the interview, either at the time of their entry or later, they are to advise the Awards team at the earliest opportunity.

Local Food Hero of the Year

- a. The closing date for nominations from the public is 18th July 2025.
- b. Nominations cannot be made for oneself or one's business nor indeed can they be made by an employee/colleague of the nominee.
- c. The category is open to:-
 - any person who is legally entitled to live and / or work in the UK, and who lives or works in Northamptonshire; and
 - any organisation based in Northamptonshire; which also meets the following criteria:-
 - is involved in the production of a food product or drink; or
 - is involved in the food and drink sector in supplying, promoting, or selling local Food goods or food services; or
 - champions local, Northamptonshire products, drinks, food venues, or food markets;and who:-
 - has a strong connection with their community; and
 - is a 'hero' in the accepted sense of the word.
 - Is involved in local food provision to those in need (i.e. food banks).

Weetabix Sustainability Award

- a. The closing date for entries is 18th July 2025. The category is open to:-
- b. Any business or organisation based in Northamptonshire; which also meets the following criteria:-
 - is involved in the production of a food product or drink; or
 - is involved in the food and drink sector in supplying, promoting, or selling local Food goods or food services
- c. Shortlisting of finalists will be based on the quality of the entry form

- d. Each entrant will be advised if they have been selected as a finalist.
- e. Each finalist will be interviewed on a chosen date (17th September in the morning) to secure further information in support of their entry and a panel of judges will discuss the results of those interviews and take into account the results of the shortlisting before determining who should receive Gold, Silver or Bronze. If an entrant is aware that they are unable to attend the interview, either at the time of their entry or later, they are to advise the Awards team at the earliest opportunity.

Food and Drink College Student of the Year

- a. The closing date for entries is 2nd May 2025
- b. The category is open to:-
 - any student aged 16-21 (on 31st July 2025 currently undertaking a full or part-time food/ drink-related course at a Northamptonshire college (Moulton, Northampton or Tresham Bedford College Group)
- c. Shortlisting of finalists will be based on:-
 - the quality of the entry form and supporting material (including video statement as appropriate)
 - the testimonials of those in support of the entry
- d. Each entrant will be advised if they have been selected as a finalist.
- e. Each finalist will be interviewed on a chosen date (3rd June) to secure further information in support of their entry and a panel of judges will discuss the results of those interviews and take into account the results of the shortlisting before determining who should receive Gold, Silver or Bronze. If an entrant is aware that they are unable to attend the interview, either at the time of their entry or later, they are to advise the Awards team at the earliest opportunity.

Healthy Food and Wellbeing Award

- a. The closing date for nominations is 18th July 2025.
- b. This category is open to:-
 - producers in Northamptonshire who are manufacturing a new healthy food (since January 2025), or making a product healthier, AND
 - businesses and organisations who provide healthy food and wellbeing initiatives for their staff.
- c. We are defining 'healthy food' as those lower in fat, salt and sugars which can be used as part of a balanced diet.
- d. Entrants may be required to undertake a telephone interview with a nominated person to ascertain further details upon receipt of the entry form.
- e. Shortlisting process. Judges will consider all entries and will select a shortlist of 3-5 finalists based on results of the telephone interview alongside the entry form and each entrant will then be advised whether they are a finalist.
- f. Producers who are shortlisted will be asked to provide samples for tasting (with cooking/serving instructions) for 18th September 2025.
- g. Healthy Workplace finalists will be visited by the judges on 16th September.
- h. Judges will then use the results of all the information to determine the results of the competition and the Gold, Silver and Bronze winners.

Farming Environment Award

- a. The closing date for registration 18th April 2025.
- b. This category is open to all Protocol Growers who have supplied Weetabix with Wheat within the last two years. All participants will be verified by the organisers to ensure that they meet the terms and conditions, and within the spirit of the Awards.
- c. The panel will consider all entries and will select a shortlist of 3-5 finalists based on:-
 - the quality of the 'Register of Interest' form, supporting material and details Secured from any subsequent telephone conversation (if required)
 - advice received from Northamptonshire Trading Standards Department and the relevant Unitary Authority's Environmental Health Department (if applicable)
- d. A panel of judges will be looking for farmers who have taken action or made changes over the last two years to reduce the environmental impact of growing wheat, through any or all of these measures:
 - Carbon footprint reduction
 - Promoted wildlife
 - Regenerative agriculture
 - Support of local community
 - Succession and long term vision for the farm
- e. Entries will be assessed on the impact they have made as well as the initiative and commitment they have shown to make a real difference. This information will be used to select the 3 to 5 finalists.
- f. Each entrant will then be advised whether they have been selected as a finalist.
- g. Final judging. Finalists will then be visited on 12th or 13th May 2025 by the judges. If a finalist is aware that they are unable to attend the interview, either at the time of their entry or later, they are to advise the Awards team at the earliest opportunity.

Judging Criteria

The judging criteria for the Local Food Hero, Booker Gastro Pub, Restaurant of the Year, Community Café and World Cuisine Restaurant categories are set out below. Details of the criteria for other categories are set out in the relevant entry form.

Local Food Hero

Entry

Members of the public, and food related businesses and individuals will be invited to nominate their Local Food Hero. The nomination process will be advertised but will require the person making the nomination to furnish correct contact information, in the case that further information in support of their nomination is required. The closing date for nominations is 18th July 2025. Nominators may not own or work for the business/organisation which they are nominating, or nominate themselves.

Longlisting

A panel of judges will select a longlist from the nominations received and further research will be carried out by the Awards' team in support of the nomination. Nominators and/or longlisted entries may be contacted and asked to provide further information.

Shortlisting

From the longlisted nominations received, a panel of local judges will select their finalists, based on the following criteria:-

Public Support

- comments made on nomination forms submitted by members of the public
- reviews for community involvement
- the efforts of the entrant to promote and champion local produce in a range of scenarios.

Hero status:-

- the fitness to the status 'Local Food Hero'

Each entrant will then be advised whether they have been selected as a finalist.

Judging

A panel of judges will meet each of the finalists on 7th August 2025 in order to determine who best fits the title 'Local Food Hero' in the spirit of the awards. The panel will determine who should receive Gold, Silver or Bronze.

Booker Gastro Pub, Restaurant of the Year, Community Café and World Cuisine Restaurant

- Venues will be verified by the organisers to ensure compliance with the Terms and Conditions, and within the spirit of the Awards. Organisers will use their best efforts to assist all participants to comply with the Terms and Conditions but cannot be held responsible if for any reason an entry has to be disqualified or rejected.
- Venue details will be passed to the relevant local Trading Standards Department and the relevant Environmental Health Department to disclose to the organisers and judges any relevant significant history, complaints, or breaches of relevant Regulations or law. The organisers will determine what action to take as a result of any such disclosure.

Registering of interest

All qualifying venues are invited to complete and submit the form on the Awards website before the closing date of (20th June 2025).

Longlisting

All venues which have registered interest in taking part, or have been recommended to the Awards teams, will be put forward through a preliminary selection process which may involve telephone, online or other research or mystery shopping in order to identify a longlist. This will be reviewed and FHRS of 4 or above and if compliant a mystery shopper will be organised.

Mystery Shopping – stage 1

All entries will receive a visit from at least one Mystery Shopper who will not identify themselves to you. The visit(s) will take place at any time between the submission of the entry form and the date of the shortlisting session. The cost of the meal/meals will be picked up by the Mystery Shopper(s).

The criteria for the Mystery Shopping – stage 1 are as follows:

- Quality of service; including welcome, nature and appropriateness of front of house contact, communication, speed of service, knowledge of menu etc.
- Food and drink; including variety of the menu, presentation, use of seasonal produce, combinations of flavours, dietary considerations, healthy options, portion size, variety of drinks to compliment the menu.
- Use of local produce; including extent of local produce across the menu, and whether local ingredients are clearly shown on the menu or celebrated elsewhere in the venue
- Overall experience; including parking facilities, cleanliness of toilets, ambience
- Disability Awareness.
- In the case of Community Cafe, mystery shoppers will look for evidence of your Community engagement

Shortlisting

An expert panel of 4-6 local judges will then select their shortlist based on the report from the Mystery Shopper(s), the entry form and supporting material only, the criteria being:-

The entry form including:-

- Quality of the entry form and supporting material
- Mystery Shopper feedback
- Community engagement for community cafe

Range of menu and value for money

- Does it offer a variety of dishes, including healthy options and dietary considerations?
- Is there a variety of drinks to complement the Menu, including the wine list?

Ingredients

- Are seasonal/local products used?
- Are local suppliers' names mentioned/celebrated on the menu or in the venue?

Compliance including:-

Any advice received from the relevant local Trading Standards Department and the relevant local Environmental Health Department.

The panel will select the finalists and each entrant will then be advised whether they are a finalist.

Mystery Shopping – stage 2

The finalists will be Mystery Shopped separately by (at least) two members of an expert panel who may be accompanied. The Mystery Shoppers will identify themselves at the end of the meal and will pay for any drinks taken. The cost of the meals (up to six) will be subsidised by the entrant, with the exception of Community Cafe.

Again, finalists will be advised of the period during which this Mystery Shopping stage will take place.

The criteria for the Mystery Shopping – stage 2 are as follows:

- Quality of service
- Presentation and quality of food
- Staff awareness of menus and an ability to explain the locality, seasonality and choice of ingredients.
- Quality of service, e.g. welcome, nature and appropriateness of front of house contact, communication, speed of service etc.
- Overall experience (for example parking facilities, cleanliness of toilets, ambience etc)
- Disability awareness and accessibility

The Mystery Shopping – stage 2 will use the following guideline marking scheme (scores will be adjusted for Community Café):-

Quality of food 50%

Use of local produce 5%

Quality of service 30%

Overall ambience 10%

Dining for all 5%

External Panel

External judges will discuss the results of the Mystery Shopping – stage 2 and will take into account the results of the Mystery Shopping – stage 1, before determining which venues should receive Gold, Silver or Bronze. The results will be announced at the Awards Celebration.

Gold Award Mentoring

All Gold Award winners will have the opportunity to receive a free mentoring session with an expert, independent panel.