



ORMSKIRK PIZZA CHEF CREATES AWARD-WINNING PIZZA

Winners of the annual competition to find Britain's best Pizza Chef announced



A pizza chef from Ormskirk has scooped a top prize at the Pizza Chef of the Year competition – a highlight of the annual Pizza, Pasta & Italian Food Industry Awards, which took place in a star-studded ceremony on Thursday, 9 November 2023.

Nicola Jackson Jones, pizza chef and founder at Two Cents Pizza in Ormskirk, earned the accolade for her Greek-inspired Yam-Yasss! pizza, which includes ingredients such as halloumi, lamb kofta and charred onion petals.

The annual Pizza Chef of the Year competition invites pizza professionals from across the country to enter. They are challenged to create an innovative pizza using a selected sponsored ingredient as the key element and other food components of their choice. The five categories in the 2023 competition were sponsored by Futura Foods, Whitworth Bros., Danish Crown, Silbury and Dawn Farms.

Finalists went head-to-head to create the best-tasting, best-looking and most innovative pizza, all under the watchful eyes of the expert judging panel, including celebrity chef Theo Randall, Marco Fuso, MFP Consultancy, Michael Eyre, product director at Jestic, Michele Pascarella, Napoli on the Road and co-founder of renowned Pizza Pilgrims restaurants, Thom Elliot.

Then, later that day, Theo Randall and comedian Adam Bloom revealed category winners and the overall champion during the gala evening celebrating the industry at the Royal Lancaster, London.

Nicola, who has entered the competition many times and previously been crowned a winner, said: "I always really enjoy this competition, but I still get nervous and a little stressed ahead of it.

"This year, I wanted to create something that tasted incredible and featured complimentary ingredients. Halloumi and Lamb Kofta are just that. I also added chilli to give the look and taste a little lightness and brightness.

"I can't believe I won again this year. It is always such a pleasure to take this accolade. I am very proud to once again be told my pizzas are the best. It makes the nerves very much worth it. Now it's time to celebrate!"

Nicola owns Two Cents Pizza, a dream of hers to get away from a desk job and into the world of pizza. Equipped with a newly acquired pizza oven and fuelled by her passion, Nicola's business and pizza-making quickly grew to new heights. However, just eight months after Two Cents opened, the pandemic hit. Nicola adapted quickly, collaborating with a local taxi driver to deliver pizzas during lockdown.

In 2022 she made the decision to close down her restaurant and focus on pizza training and consultancy. She's recently been appointed UK Technical Trainer for Petra flour.

Jim Winship, director of the Pizza, Pasta & Italian Food Association, said: "What we tasted at this event were no ordinary pizzas...with ingredients such as halloumi, lamb kofta and charred onion petals, our chefs are continually pushing the boundaries of creativity within everyone's favourite slice. We've tasted some truly tremendous pizzas!

"Nicola's creation really stood out in the Futura Foods YAMAS! Halloumi category. It truly shows the diversity of pizza and how you can make it into anything you want it to be. The judges were wowed by Nicola's Yam-Yasss! Pizza, and we all said we could've eaten it again and again."

"Nicola's creations really stood out. It truly shows how creativity in ingredients can really elevate the humble pizza. Her entry wowed the judges, and we all said we could've eaten it again and again."

"Every year, I can't wait to see what pizzas are placed before me. The entries were unbelievable," said Theo Randall, one of the esteemed judges.

"I was wowed by the diversity of flavours, textures, and toppings, including some delectable vegetarian ingredients that impressed.

"As always, it is a tricky job to narrow down the winners, but I always just look to the pizzas I still remember and want all over again many slices later. A huge congratulations to all the winners this year. The country is clearly full of pizza talent, and I am proud to judge this competition every year."

Jim continued: “This competition, and the wider PAPA Awards, are a highlight in the calendar. It is also a precursor to the annual [National Pizza Week](#), a seven-day celebration aiming to support the industry and celebrate the nation’s love of a good pizza. With all the events at this time of year, some say it’s pizza and pasta season in the industry. We just want to ensure that those pizza stars across the country are recognised for their hard work, creativity and passion in another challenging year.

Winners at the Pizza Chef of the Year competition:

Entrants competed over five categories, which were judged on their taste, base quality, presentation, commercial viability and innovative use of the sponsor’s product. Category winners were then put forward for the coveted overall competition winner title.

- Futura Foods YAMAS! Halloumi: Nicola Jackson Jones – Yam-Yasss!
 - Whitworth Bros. “Chef’s Special”: Brigi Stamber – Return of the M.A.C
 - Silbury Famously Authentic Pizza Sauce: Scott Holden – Pepperoni & Hot Honey Detroit
 - Dawn Farms Sustainable Topping: Brigi Stamber – The Clucky Bird
 - Danish Crown Supertops: Scott Holden – Sicilian Prawn
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Nicola’s recipe:

YAM-YASSS!

Ingredients:

- Small Handful Futura Foods YAMAS! Halloumi
- 250g Doughball
- 120ml Tomato Sauce – Nicola has used homemade but free to use shop bought
- Handful lamb kofta - Nicola has used homemade but free to use shop bought
- 9 Sweet Red Peppers
- 8 Charred Onion Petals
- Small Spoonful Chopped Pickled Chilli
- Spoonful Parmesan

Instructions:

1. Roll out ready-made dough into a 12” circle shape.
2. Fry lamb kofta until brown.
3. Roast onions in the oven until brown around the edges.
4. Chop peppers and chillis.
5. Poach 1-2cm thick strips of halloumi in boiling water for a couple minutes.
6. Spread tomato sauce evenly over pizza base.
7. Add halloumi, lamb, peppers and onions.

8. Bake the pizza in a high heat oven for 90 seconds or until the crust is golden.
9. Garnish the baked pizza with pickled chilli and parmesan.

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For additional information, images, and interview requests, please contact:

the press office team: (e) Becks@hoppr.co.uk

(t) [07951 605454](tel:07951605454)

Editors Notes:

About the competition:

The annual British competition invites pizza professionals from across the country to enter by creating an innovative pizza using the sponsor's ingredient as the key element and any other ingredients of their choice.

To enter, pizza makers submit written entries, along with photography, which is judged anonymously by the sponsors. Then, the top recipes chosen are invited to the finals, where creations are brought to life.

All contestants are asked to consider the judging criteria when creating their dish – which are taste, base quality, presentation, commercial viability, and innovative use of sponsors products.

The competition is also seen as the precursor to another annual event in the pizza calendar – National Pizza Week, which will be celebrated between 20th-26th November 2023.

About National Pizza Week:

National Pizza Week takes place from 20-26 November 2023. The annual event showcases the breadth, quality and innovation found within the UK's pizza sector. Find out more <https://www.itspizzaweek.com/>

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Website: <https://www.itspizzaweek.com/>

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About The Pizza, Pasta and Italian Food Association:

The Pizza, Pasta & Italian Food Association (PAPA) is the only formal trade body in the UK representing the broad pizza and Italian food and drink industry. Simply put, they help their members to do better business, whether it be in challenging legislation on their behalf, helping them to understand the impact of changing markets and legislation on their business or in bringing their members together to network and learn. They do all they can to boost the profile of and the opportunity in the pizza, pasta and Italian food market, giving their members – whether they are manufacturers, suppliers or restaurateurs – the best platform from which they can trade.