

food & drink

dining out • recipes • local produce • eating in



Chemistry teacher is champion cidemaker

A Somerset research and development chemist who started making cider as a hobby 15 years ago has won the Supreme Cider Champion 2019 award at the British Cider Championships held at the Bath & West Show.

Robert Whale of Southdown Cider also scooped Gold for his dry cider, beating 51 other competitors in that category.

Robert is a chemistry teacher working at a local school and moved to Southdown, a hamlet near Shepton Montague, 15 years ago. Southdown Cider's motto is "bringing life back to Somerset's forgotten orchards", and he uses only apples collected himself from small orchards locally - traditional varieties like Yarlington Mill, Harry Masters, Sweet Coppin and White Jersey.

He says his training as a chemist has been very useful in getting the balance right. And it's paid off, as the judges said his cider was "the epitome of a beautifully made and balanced dry Somerset cider".

Robert started taking it seriously three years ago and won a Silver award at the Bath & West with his champagne cider.

"Ninety five per cent of it is scrumping on a big scale," said Robert, who does everything himself with some help from wife Jo and 11-year-old son Alexander. "I get a call from the orchard owner and have to pick the apples up off the ground on my hands and knees, so I am going to see if I can build an apple harvester of my own. I then press, bottle, label and pasteurise it all myself. It is a lot of work but I just love the process, and the orchard owners are grateful that the apples are being put to good use and not rotting on the ground."

Robert also makes apple juice, mulled cider and single



Robert Whale of Southdown Cider with the Supreme Cider Champion 2019 award

variety Dabinett cider and will have 2000 bottles of his award-winning batch for sale shortly. He only makes still cider and has a loyal local customer base. "Other local cidemakers like Alan Berry of Blackmore Vale Cider in Templecombe, Alan Stone of Stone's Cider and Bob Chaplin of Broadpool Cider in Shepton Mallet have been very supportive and given help and advice freely," he said.

You can buy Southdown Cider and apple juice at Leweston School summer fair on Saturday 22nd June and at the Mid-Somerset Show in August as well as emailing southdowncider@btinternet.com to arrange collection direct. It is also for sale in the Montague Inn Shepton Montague, Dike & Son in Stalbridge, Spar Bruton, Somerset Wine Co in Castle Cary and The Cider Shack in Yeovil. **TR**

Other local cidemakers who won awards at the show include Cranborne Chase Cider in Minchington which won Reserve Champion Farmhouse Cider, Gold for Farmhouse Dry and Highly Commended for The Whitewigs sweet cider; The Donhead Apple Co of Donhead St Mary won Bronze for bottle fermented cider, Stone's Cider of Shepton Mallet won Gold for Naturally Sweet and Silver for Dry Cider; West Milton Cider won Silver for Dorset Perry.

Beer festival returns for seventh year

Hall & Woodhouse's annual Dorset Beer Festival is on Saturday 22nd June at the Brewery in Blandford.

Showcasing over 50 different beers and ciders, the event supports local craft breweries and cider makers, as well as the brewer's own Badger Beer. Brewhouse & Kitchen, Timothy Taylor's and Thatchers are amongst some of the other brewers confirmed for this year's festival.

New for 2019, there will be an outdoor kitchen area, comprising four outdoor ovens that will serve a variety of pizza and flatbreads. Salcombe Dairy Ice Cream will be returning to the festival for those with a sweet tooth. Colourful Coffee and Rio soft drinks, both in the Hall & Woodhouse portfolio, will be available on the day.

In addition to the extensive line-up of food and drink on offer, there will also be a jam-packed programme of live music for festival-goers to enjoy, including bands 'Just Us' and the 'Brass Monkeys'.

Over the past six years, the festival has supported a number of charities including Macmillan Cancer Support, Blandford Opportunity Group, Alzheimer's Society, Teddy20 and Together for Short Lives. In total, the one-day event has raised over £40,000 for the charities supported since it began in 2013. This year's funds raised will be donated to the company's charity of the year, the local Air Ambulance charities.

Toby Heasman, head brewer at Hall &

Woodhouse, said: "Our annual Dorset Beer Festival is a great day out for all the family and is the perfect opportunity for the local community to come together. The day really does offer something for everyone, with activities for the kids and their parents too. The amount the festival has raised for charity has grown year-on-year so we are hoping for the same success in 2019."

Above and beyond the festival, Hall & Woodhouse has raised more than £800,000 for charity over the past seven years through its different initiatives. As a

company Hall & Woodhouse is committed to supporting the local community across the south of England and is always looking for new ways to give back to its guests.

Tickets for the Hall & Woodhouse Dorset Beer Festival are available to buy online for £10 per person at www.hallwoodhousebeerfest.com. This price includes entry, a beer glass, programme and six drink tokens. Tickets will be available to purchase on the gate subject to availability. The event runs from 11am-10pm, with last entry at 8pm.

An evening for wine aficionados

Vineyards in Sherborne celebrates its 14th year this week and is holding a wine night with Antony Davis from Mentendorff on Thursday 20th June, 6.30pm-8.30pm. Antony has been in the wine trade for quite a number of years and is an enthusiastic supporter of the independent market.

Food & Drink



Dorset Farmers Market

Saturday 15th June
Wimborne Market Square
9am - 1pm

Friday 21st June
Sherborne, Cheap Street
9am - 1pm

Saturday 22nd June
Dorchester, South Street
9am - 4pm

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