



Alex Morte claims the title NACC Care Cook of the Year 2016

Alex Morte, chef de partie at Signature's Coombe Hill Manor in Kingston-upon-Thames, is officially the best care cook in the UK. Alex was crowned the National Association of Care Catering (NACC) Care Cook of the Year 2016 yesterday, following the thrilling national final of the respected culinary competition.

At the age of 21 he is also the youngest champion in the competition's history.

At Barking & Dagenham College's Technical Skills Academy, 12 finalists pushed the boundaries to showcase their exceptional knowledge, talent and flair in the specific field of care catering.

Alex and his winning menu of *Grilled hake, charred asparagus, pea purée, crispy dill potatoes, crispy bacon and grilled vine cherry tomatoes* followed by *Dark chocolate and salted caramel delice with a chocolate tuile* claimed the title after 90 minutes of intense competition.

Alex stood out to the judges as the clear winner for many reasons. The calm and confident chef demonstrated excellent cooking skills and technique to produce beautifully-presented dishes with a real depth of flavour.

Alex said on his win: "I am absolutely blown away to have won! This is my first ever competition so to be the winner is amazing and unbelievable. The final was a great experience. It was nerve-wracking at first but once I started cooking I relaxed and I actually enjoyed it. For the judges to say there was a 'clear winner' is a great feeling and I am very proud."

Martin McKee from The Hawthorns care home in Aldridge took second place, with Alan Cash of Mildenhall Lodge care home in Mildenhall taking third place.

Alex Morte was also awarded *Highly Commended Main* and Martin McKee took *Highly Commended Dessert*.

Neel Radia, national chair, NACC, comments: "Congratulations to Alex Morte, the NACC Care Cook of the Year 2016! Every year this fantastic competition just gets

better and better. That was an exciting and closely-fought final and Alex should be incredibly proud of his title.

“I applaud every single finalist for an exceptional display of culinary excellence. They all impressed the judges with their innovation, creativity and skill, and also the expertise and understanding of the complex nutritional, dietary and dining needs of those in a care environment that they demonstrated.

“I am thrilled to see the NACC Care Cook of the Year competition grow year on year. It is testament to the high standards and genuine talent within our sector and to the dedication of care chefs to continuously deliver excellence on behalf of those entrusted to their care. All of the competitors are great ambassadors for the exciting and rewarding care catering sector.”

The NACC Care Cook of the Year competition seeks out the best care cook in the UK by challenging entrants to create a nutritionally-balanced, two-course menu (main and dessert) that is suitable for service users in a care setting. The combined food cost for both courses must be no more than £1.50 per head based on four portions and it is to be produced in just 90 minutes.

Each competitor is expected to demonstrate nutritional understanding of the foods they are using, plus culinary flair in flavours, execution and presentation, with the appropriateness for the target clientele always a priority. In addition, the judges are looking for innovation, costing, suitability for the environment, adherence to nutrition guidelines, taste and overall menu balance.

For more information on the NACC Care Cook of the Year 2016 competition visit www.thenacc.co.uk

Ends

Notes to editors:

- Full details of the finalists' menus are available on request
- Images available on request
- The competition is supported by the Worshipful Company of Cooks and Premier Foods

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The NACC

The National Association of Care Catering (NACC) is a progressive organisation representing professionals providing catering to the care industry. They are recognised by Local Authorities, independent providers, the charitable sector and Government departments as a prime source of information and opinion on all aspects of catering within the care sector and whose primary aim is to improve standards.

The NACC works with a number of partners to:

- Promote and enrich the standard of catering within the care sector, whether that catering be provided by Social Care Departments or other Caring Agencies
- Provide a forum for debate among individuals, companies and organisations of all kinds involved in catering for the care sector
- Facilitate the exchange of information, experience and expertise
- Promote the development of professional standards among those involved in catering for the care sector
- Commission research into matters relating to catering for the care sector
- Publish guidelines, policy papers and authoritative statements on all aspects of catering for the care sector

www.thenacc.co.uk

Barking & Dagenham College's Technical Skills Academy

The NACC Care Cook of the Year national final was held at Barking & Dagenham College's Technical Skills Academy. Each year around 500 students, age 16-18, enrol at the Academy for technical and professional training with a clear line of sight to work. The next generation of professional chefs learn in spacious, well-equipped training kitchens, as well as learning on-the-job in the Academy's commercial restaurant and café which are open to the public. As well as catering and hospitality, students can choose a variety of subjects including construction, childcare, digital and IT, media-makeup, hairdressing and beauty therapy.

www.barkingdagenhamcollege.ac.uk/technical-skills-academy