



MARLBOROUGH'S PINOLI PREMIUM PINE NUTS TAKE SUPREME CHAMPION TITLE AT OUTSTANDING NZ FOOD PRODUCER AWARDS 2023

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Marlborough's **Pinoli Premium Pine Nuts** has been recognised for its tiny flavour-filled nuts and its risky journey to become the southern hemisphere's only pine nut producer - being named Supreme Champion at the Outstanding NZ Food Producer Awards 2023.

Investing in the Mediterranean pine aka *Pinus pinea* is a long game; its first crop is only harvestable after eight to 10 years, so it was a leap of faith for **Pinoli Premium Pine Nuts** founders Andy and Barb Wiltshire and general manager, Lee Paterson. Andy Wiltshire said failure was never an option, and since the first planting in 1998, the company has planted 500,000 trees on 540 hectares in Marlborough's Wairau Valley. Pinoli pine nuts are sold to food lovers throughout New Zealand and Australia and recently began exporting to Europe.

Head Judge Lauraine Jacobs said; "the judges were excited by the fresh taste of these high quality nuts and unanimous in their acclaim for these sweet little orbs of good taste. This outstanding product involves intensive work and is a fine example of careful monitoring throughout growing, harvesting, processing and packaging to bring a consistently brilliant product to market. Pinoli Premium Pine Nuts are an excellent local food that soar above any comparable import."

In addition to being named Supreme Champion 2023, **Pinoli Premium Pine Nuts** was named Farro Earth Champion. The judges' feedback was outstanding; "*Excellent, amazing flavour and aroma and a nice little sweetness at the end. An awesome product all round. The favourite product we tasted all day!*"

Reflecting on all 2023 Champions, Lauraine Jacobs noted; "It was also very satisfying to witness the high level of praise for locally produced meat. By far the largest group of Gold Medal winners was in the Paddock category and it was almost an impossible task for the team to separate so many outstanding meats to name the Champion of this category, Moreish Organic Butchery. The strength of this field is an affirmation of the fine work our Kiwi farmers are doing."

Emerson's Paddock Champion **Moreish Organic Butchery** received the accolade for its **Organic Scotch Fillet** and **Pure Organic Beef Burger Patties**; both of which received Gold Medals. Tasting judges said the Moreish Organic Scotch Fillet had '*Amazing mouthfeel, luscious. Tender and juicy...*' While the sustainability judges noted they had an excellent sustainability strategy. Manawatū couple Braden Parsons and Nicola Fitzsimons operate Moreish with a team of 10 – including three butchers - processing beef, lamb, chicken and pork from a network of 50 certified organic farmers which they only sell online.

One of a handful of returning winners, this year's Seafood New Zealand Champion is **Tora Collective Crayfish**. At the tasting assessment the judges noted the appearance of Tora Collective's wild-caught crayfish was as good as its flavour; '*Beautifully sweet flesh. Wonderful to see antennae and legs with nothing broken.*' When commercial fisher Troy Bramley and his partner, marketer Claire Edwards realised the best kaimoana left our shores they established Tora Collective. They fish sustainably off the southern Wairarapa coast to supply 'kaimoana fresh as, straight from the ocean'. Their paua was Seafood New Zealand Champion in 2021.

The 2023 Outstanding NZ Food Producer Awards saw the return of multi-year winner; Whitestone Cheese Co. **Whitestone Oamaru Blue** has been named 2023 Dairy Champion. This follows the iconic North Otago cheesemaker Whitestone being awarded Dairy Champion in the inaugural 2017 Outstanding NZ Food

Producer Awards, being named NZ Life & Leisure Spirit of New Zealand winner and Coast People's Choice Outstanding NZ Food Producer in 2019 and amassing 27 medals over the Awards seven years. At this year's tasting, judges struggled to set aside the **Whitestone Oamaru Blue** saying *'Delicious, great blue cheese. True flavour, well balanced with buttery unctuous texture...we could not stop eating this!'*

Pete's Natural Currant Crush was given the accolade of Label & Litho Drink Champion with the judges saying, *'Sweet blackcurrant and balanced acidity. Great colour, hop notes subtle. A very enjoyable drink!'*. Tasman juicers Pete and Marleen Suy put sustainability at the heart of their business, using 30 to 50 per cent less sugar, fresh spray-free fruit, undertaking production in a solar-powered Motueka factory, using paper labels and recycled glass bottles.

Another returning Champion is Auckland boutique gelato maker; Little 'Lato received the inaugural Free-From Champion for **Little 'Lato Mango Lassi** in 2021 and received the Award again in 2023. This year's award was received along with two Gold Medals, a Silver Medal and a Bronze Medal with the judges raving about the Mango Lassi saying *'Yum we love it, blown away! Beautiful mango flavour. Great balance, not too sweet. Fab texture. Nailed it!'*

Raglan Food Co is also a returning Champion. This year they were awarded the **Marvellous Marketing Outstanding Sustainability Award**; the second time they have received this accolade, first collecting it in 2020. Sustainability judges Emily King and Fiona Stephenson said *'Raglan Food Co continues to raise the bar. It's a leader in its sector and a shining light for others to follow. What stands out is its continuous innovation and commitment to community. Sustainability has been integrated into the way the business operates from the start. It is certified as a B Corp and Toitū Climate Positive. Particularly impressive are its social initiatives, which include a staff profit share programme, staff health and wellbeing fund, and a local community fund. Raglan Food Co has an ongoing focus on innovation, which includes products as well as other initiatives, such as wastewater treatment. It is a truly impressive company that started small with organic coconut yoghurt, and is now transforming the dairy-free sector.'*

FMCG Business New Product Champion is awards newcomer, **Big Glory Bay, Fresh New Zealand King Salmon Portions**. Sanford-owned, Rakiura/Stewart Island salmon farm **Big Glory Bay** is one of the world's most remote aquaculture farms. The cool water temperature of around 12degC means growth of its Big Glory Bay New Zealand King Salmon is slow, giving it time to develop a rich, distinctive flavour. The judges noted the salmon was *'Very clean, sweet flavour. Fine texture and delicious.'*

Augustines of Central, Blackcurrants in Cassis is Marvellous Marketing Outstanding New Product – Boutique. No stranger to the winners podium, they were **Farro Earth Champion** in 2021 for Augustine's of Central Black Doris Plums in Pinot Noir Syrup. Owned by Dunedin chef Gus Hayden, Augustines of Central revives the age-old art of preserving, by giving Central Otago's summer bounty a modern twist. Of this year's Blackcurrants in Cassis, the judges said *'Amazing flavour.'*

Premium Game received the **NZ Life & Leisure Spirit of New Zealand Award** – an accolade recognising the spirit of innovation required by pioneering producers. Presenting this special award, NZ Life & Leisure editorial director Kate Coughlan said Premium Game was a great example of a sustainable business. "We were struck by the company's innovative approach to business: it utilises wild game as quality food. These pest populations such as rabbit, venison, wild pork and tahr are introduced species and they pose a great danger to our fragile ecosystems. Premium Game works with skilled hunters and butchers to prepare the meat for the market, and in a sustainable way that allows consumers to feel good about enjoying meat and in so doing help control pests. Everybody wins, and most importantly, the environment."

This year's **Emerging Business Champion, Links Quality Meats** hails from Dunedin. Since the butchery in Dunedin's CBD opened last year it has developed a reputation with locals for quality cuts and for its sausages of which they rotate 50 recipes which they make instore. Judges tasted Links Organwurst and Tube Burger sausages, awarding both Gold Medals. Of the Organwurst Sausage the judges said *"Innovative and unique."*

'Perfectly seasoned. Everyone would have a crack at this sausage, friendly. Great grind. Judges embracing this product.'

The final two awards were chosen by popular public vote; **Coast Kiwis' Favourite Food Producer; Lindsay Farm Dairy**. The Hawke's Bay certified Bio Grow organic farm sell all of their milk directly to consumers who showed their appreciation by voting them number one. In this year's Awards they also won a Silver Medal for their A2 Organic Pasteurised Milk. For the first time the Kiwis' Favourite Farmers' Market was awarded to joint winners; **Clevedon Village Farmers' Market and Otago Farmers Market. Otago Farmers Market** is a perennial favourite with market shoppers - it's the fourth time the Market has won this award! Clevedon Village Farmers' Market is also a former winner having received the title in 2018.

2023 marks the seventh year of the Outstanding NZ Food Producer Awards, with judging held at Homeland in late February. Judges tasted and assessed more than 290 locally harvested, grown and made food and drink products. Of the food 206 were recognised with medals of which 98 were Gold; 60 were Silver and a further 48 were Bronze.

Outstanding NZ Food Producer Awards organisers, Kathie Bartley and Nicola McConnell thanked the highly talented team of food professionals who gave their time and taste buds to judge the Awards. They say the quality of judges and the consideration judges give entrants when assessing their products and providing feedback is outstanding.

This year's Outstanding NZ Food Producer Awards judging panel was: Sam Borgfeldt (drinks consultant); Jennifer Yee-Collinson (drinks and food consultant); Tracy Berno (Associate Professor in Culinary Arts at AUT University); Peter Gordon (chef and co-owner Homeland); Connie Clarkson (restaurateur, food writer and head of business at Homeland); Emma Rawson (journalist); Ginny Grant; (food writer and food judge); John Kelleher (AUT programme leader, Diploma in Culinary Arts and Diploma in Patisserie); Emily King (director of Spira, sustainability judge); Anna King Shahab (food writer and food judge); Mat Mclean (executive chef and owner of Palate); Geoff Scott (chef, experienced food judge and AUT Culinary Lecturer); Tamara Rubanowski (FMCG Business Head of Content); Kathy Paterson (cook book author and food writer); Jonathon Robertson (Farro grocery category manager); Fiona Stephenson (Sustainable Business Network, sustainability judge); Vicky Tasker (Farro Content and Production Editor and former private chef), Kerry Tyack (experienced food judge); Lorna Subritzky (Coast daytime host and foodie); Pim Techamnunvivit (Michelin star chef); Julie Le Clerc (food writer and food judge) and Amanda Thompson (General Manager Moore Wilson's).

NZ Life & Leisure's May/June issue feature stories on the Supreme Champion and Category Champions, look out for it on sale from Monday 24 April 2023.

Look out for winning products wearing Champion, Gold, Silver and Bronze Outstanding NZ Food Producer Awards medals – a promise of produce made in New Zealand, which tastes outstanding!

ENDS.

For more information, photos and award logos contact Nicola McConnell, Marvellous Marketing, Nicola@marvellousmarketing.co.nz or 027 218 8120.

For photos of the 2023 Champions [visit here](#).

More information on the Awards website www.outstandingfoodproducer.co.nz



2023 OUTSTANDING NZ FOOD PRODUCER AWARDS CHAMPIONS & AWARD WINNERS

Supreme Champion and Farro Earth Champion

- Pinoli Premium Pine Nuts

Category Champions

- Seafood New Zealand Water Champion; **Tora Collective Crayfish**
- Emerson's Paddock Champion: **Moreish Organic Scotch Fillet and Moreish Pure Organic Beef Burger Patties**
- Dairy Champion; **Whitestone Oamaru Blue**
- Label & Litho Drink Champion; **Pete's Natural Currant Crush**
- Free-From Champion; **Little 'Lato Mango Lassi**

Special Awards

- New Zealand Life & Leisure, Spirit of New Zealand; **Premium Game**
- Marvellous Marketing Outstanding Sustainability Award; **Raglan Food Co**
- Marvellous Marketing Emerging Business; **Links Quality Meats**
- FMCG Business Outstanding New Product; **Big Glory Bay, Fresh New Zealand King Salmon Portions**
- Marvellous Marketing Outstanding New Product – Boutique; **Augustines of Central, Blackcurrants in Cassis**

Coast Kiwis' Favourites (Public Vote)

- Kiwis' Favourite Food Producer; **Lindsay Farm Dairy**
- Kiwis' Favourite Farmers' Market; Joint Winners; **Clevedon Village Farmers' Market & Otago Farmers Market**