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Sodexo chef scoops LACA School Chef of the Year honour

School chef Sonia Reynolds, from Bussage, has been named School Chef of the Year by the Local Authority Caterers Association (LACA), in a national competition sponsored by Maggi from Nestle Professional.

Sonia, who works for Sodexo, a leading food and facilities management services provider, at Brimscombe Church of England Primary School in Stroud, beat eight other chefs in a final cook-off, held at University College Birmingham.

Sonia beat chefs from across England, Wales and Scotland, to win the most prestigious competition of its kind.

LACA's School Chef of the Year Competition is the industry's premier culinary event exclusively for those in the education catering sector. The competition aims to showcase the high standards of skill, creativity and professionalism amongst school caterers. The competition was open to all kitchen based staff employed by organisations that are full members of LACA and are involved with the daily preparation of school meals.



Her main course of 'Funkie Organic Stuffed Pepper', followed by a 'Strawberry tartlet' dessert, not only gave her the coveted 2008 LACA School Chef of the Year trophy, but also earned her a cash prize, a day's vocational experience and invitations to a calendar of high profile catering industry events.

The annual competition put the preparation, cooking, creativity and presentation skills of school chefs to the test with each entrant required to produce, in just one and a half hours, a healthy balanced two-course meal comprising of a main course and dessert that would appeal to eleven year olds in school. The dishes had to conform to the new Food-based Nutritional Standards with a maximum of 90p per head allowed for the food cost of a main course and dessert for one child.

As part of eight different judging criteria which applied at all stages of the competition, contestants had to include ingredients that reflected seasonal availability and had been sourced locally or typify the contestant's region. Joining the 2008 Judging Panel for the second year was celebrity chef John Burton Race.



Sonia said: "This is unbelievable. When I got to school this morning, the welcome I got from the children and parents was fantastic, that feeling will stay with me forever. Whilst the accolades are wonderful, it's really the children that matter and I am as pleased for them, as much as I am for myself.

"I am so proud that I have won it for Sodexo and the school, as I have had so much support from so many people. My dad, who was a chef, will be looking down on me with so much pride. I would recommend this experience to every single cook."

Jane Bristow, managing director, Sodexo Education said: "We are very proud of Sonia. Her win is testament to the type of person we have here at Sodexo - she is incredibly popular with teachers, parents, colleagues and most importantly, the children. Sonia reflects our ethos of training our people, encouraging them to achieve the very best and provide our customers with exciting, healthy and tasty food day in day out. We look forward to supporting her further development over the course of the coming year."

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About Sodexo

In the UK and Ireland, Sodexo employs 43,000 employees, and provides food and facilities management services to clients at over 2,300 locations in the corporate, education, healthcare, leisure and defence sectors.

Many companies rely on Sodexo for cost-effective solutions to their employee or hospitality catering, or to deliver services such as cleaning, reception, switchboard and help desks, mailroom, reprographics and grounds maintenance.

Sodexo is part of the Sodexo group, the leading global provider of food and facilities management services, with more than 342,000 employees at 29,000 sites in 80 countries.

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