

2024 Best in Show Winner
Lisa Miles
HCL Ltd



FINISHING TOUCHES
PROMOTING
CULINARY TALENT
2025
SPONSORED BY **McDougalls** since 1864

Wednesday 9th July 2025
Hilton Birmingham
Metrople



LACA
the school food people
MAIN EVENT



Competition held in association
with the Craft Guild of Chefs

Dear LACA colleagues

Finishing Touches is firmly established as the key opportunity for school caterers to show their culinary talents and for their skills to be judged by the Craft Guild of Chefs against national standards. We are pleased to welcome back McDougalls as sponsor for this year's competition.

LACA is rightly proud of the high quality of entries in the competition and in seeing the progressive rise in entries to over 200 in recent years across the range of categories, showing the passion in our industry for craft skills among our staff.

Finishing Touches will be open for entries on **Wednesday 9th July** – this is to give as many competitors as possible the chance to enter the competition and be at the venue for the announcement of the Best in Show winner at the end of the day.

There are 12 categories covering sweet and savoury, highly decorated cakes to traybakes suitable to serve in schools across the country, giving entrants the opportunity to showcase different skill sets from cake baking and decorating, a savoury quiche and cakes for special diets. The Floral Sugarcraft class has been replaced by a Flat Bas Relief Plaque with a school lunch theme - see page 5 for further details on this new category. There really is something for everyone to try their hand at, a great way to highlight the talent across our profession.

In addition to the cash prize, the Best in Show winner, chosen from all Best in Class entries, will be invited to join the judging panel for next year's Finishing Touches competition as part of their prize.

We hope to see the number of entries up to the usual levels again this year, showcasing the profile of school catering which has never been higher and a great way to display the talents within our industry.

Good luck and I look forward to seeing your entries on display in July

Judith Gregory
LACA National Chair

Finishing Touches is a culinary salon organised by LACA in association with the Craft Guild of Chefs. Now in its 17th year the competition is aimed at all levels of staff employed in any aspect of education catering capable of producing excellent craft pieces. It provides entrants with the opportunity to show off their skills which would not normally be seen during their everyday profession.

The Finishing Touches Display Salon will take place during the LACA Main Event on **Wednesday 9th July** at the Hilton Birmingham Metropole.

The criteria has been set by the Craft Guild of Chefs and are explained over the next few pages. The Craft Guild of Chefs will judge the entries and certificates of entry will be awarded to all entrants. Gold, Silver and Bronze certificates will be awarded to those who achieve the highest standards and a Best in Class will be picked in each category as well as a Best in Show from all categories.

We look forward to receiving your entries by Friday 30th May and to seeing your work on display in July.

Display Static Classes:

- ★ **50% Fruit Dessert**
- ★ **Biscuits**
- ★ **Cake Suitable for Special Diet**
- ★ **Cheesecake**
- ★ **Cupcakes**
- ★ **Decorated Celebration Cake**
- ★ **Decorated Novelty Cake**
- ★ **Filled and/or Covered Sponge, Gateau or Cake**
- ★ **Flat Bas Relief Plaque - NEW FOR 2025**
- ★ **Individual Fruit Tarts**
- ★ **Tray Bake**
- ★ **Vegetarian Quiche**

We will once again be presenting and judging all the classes in one day – Wednesday 9th July. This format gives competitors and delegates plenty of time to view the entries whilst my team of expert judges carefully marked the pieces.

We are looking forward to welcoming as many of you as possible to this year's event in Birmingham, showcasing all the talent in the Education sector.

For this year, we have replaced the Floral Sugarcraft Display Piece with a Flat Bas Relief Plaque which should have a school lunch theme – full details on page 5.

Please read the criteria carefully for each class for clear guidance on what is and is not permitted. Can I just reiterate to you that, however fantastic the piece you present, if it doesn't meet the criteria and cannot be changed to another class on the day, I am sorry to say it won't be marked. Please feel free to contact the organisers with any question you have and I'll be happy to respond. Remember - if in doubt, just ask.

The Craft Guild of Chefs are so pleased to be involved with this display salon and every year look forward to seeing some of the great dishes and presentation pieces that are put forward.

Good luck and enjoy your cooking!!!!

**Steve Munkley GCFA CG Hon Prof
Vice President Craft Guild of Chefs**



We're thrilled to sponsor the LACA Finishing Touches once again. This prestigious event continues to shine a spotlight on the incredible talent and dedication of school chefs, giving them a platform to showcase their passion, creativity, and exceptional culinary skills.

Finishing Touches is open to employees at all levels within the education catering sector and we can't wait to see what this year's competitors bring to the event. Year after year, we are blown away by the standard of entries across all categories including cakes, tarts, desserts and savoury dishes.

Our range of McDougalls Flour, Flour-Based Mixes, and Reduced Fat Cocoa Powder provide a simple yet versatile base for a variety of sweet and savoury creations making them ideal for use in this competition. We're looking forward to being part of the judging panel and celebrating the outstanding culinary talent in the education sector.

Good luck to everyone who enters.

Mariela Petkova
Channel Marketing Manager - Foodservice



★ ENTER TO WIN UP TO £350 IN PRIZES

£100
prize for each Best in Class winner

£250
prize for the overall Best in Show winner

Entry Criteria

50% Fruit Dessert

This class will be looking for four plated portions of a creative dessert that would be served to students; it must consist of a minimum of 50% fruit in its content. The fruit used can be fresh, dried, frozen or canned. The remaining ingredients are the choice of the competitor, but must not contain any nuts or pastry. This class will be tasted and the use of fresh fruits not in season in July will be discouraged.



Biscuits

Six pieces each of four different varieties of biscuits served on a single platter no larger than 40cm x 40cm.

The judges will be looking for a variety of textures, shapes and flavours. All six pieces of biscuit made in that variety are to be uniform in size and shape. The biscuits will be tasted.



Cheesecake

The judges will be looking for an 8-12 portion cheesecake, which will be served as a whole cake; it can be of any shape and decorated appropriately. The cheesecake may consist of a baked or set mixture with any flavour or filling of the competitor's choice, but no nuts are to be used, however coconut will be permitted. A precise recipe, description and list of allergens for the cheesecake will need to be displayed next to the exhibit. This dish will be tasted



Cake suitable for special diet

Competitors are required to prepare an 8-10 portion whole cake, suitable to be served to children who have either gluten or dairy intolerance or both. A recipe card is required to be presented next to the cake listing all the ingredients used. This class will be tasted



Cupcakes

To present a selection of 4 varieties, 2 of each variety of cupcakes (8 in total) to the competitor's choice. Guidelines: Perfectly executed cupcakes that are pleasing in appearance, texture and taste, and practical to eat. Not to include fresh cream. Title and description of dish to be provided. This class will be tasted.



Decorated Celebration Cake

A celebration cake can be any shape with a maximum display area of 40cm x 40cm. Coated with rolled fondant, sugar paste, or royal icing. Dummy bases may be used. Decoration of competitor's choice, but no non edible material may penetrate the coating of the cake. Wired flowers may be placed on the cake, but the stems must not be inserted into the coating. Cakes must be presented on suitable boards.



Entry Criteria

Decorated Novelty Cake

A novelty cake, any shape coated with any decorative medium, having a maximum display area 45cm x 45cm. The cake will be cut and tasted. Marking criteria will take into account serving and eating quality of the cake, creativity, visual impact and skills used. No artificial decoration (that is wires, cocktail sticks, posy picks, lolly sticks etc) may penetrate the coating, but may be used in the piece.



Filled and/or Covered Sponge, Gateau or Cake

To present a sponge or cake of competitors choice no larger than 30cm. Filled and/or covered with butter cream or chocolate. Seasonal fruits to be used, either in the filling or as decoration. A cake/sponge suitable for afternoon snack. Title and description of dish to be provided. Please note: not to include fresh cream.



Flat Bas Relief Plaque - NEW FOR 2025

Decorate a FLAT plaque using sugar paste in the style of "Bas Relief" not to exceed 16cm and depicting the theme of a school meal that meets the School Food Plan and Eatwell Guide standards. Colours of the competitor's choice. Please note - picture shown is for illustrative purposes only to show the type of plaque required, it doesn't reflect the theme.



Individual Fruit Tarts

Three varieties of tart, two pieces of each (six individual pieces in total) are required for presentation. The marking criteria will take into consideration the use of seasonal fruits, any reduction of sugar in the finished tart and a variety of base and filling mediums used. This will be a tasted class and a detailed menu and recipe description to be displayed with the pieces for judges to review.



Tray Bake

Suitable for lunch or dessert, tray bakes can be eye-catching, creative and innovative. Whether it's a rocky road or brownie, a bakewell slice or a unique flapjack or energy bar. The bake needs to be represent 8 portions and can be either presented cut in to 8 portions or left whole with 2 portions cut for tasting. The title and brief description of dish to be provided. This class will be tasted.



Vegetarian Quiche

Entries are required for a 18-20cm (7-8inch) vegetarian quiche. The judges will be looking for an evenly lined and baked flan base with a well-cooked filling. The filling can include dairy products including cheese, a recipe card will be required with allergens listed. This class will be cut but NOT tasted



Rules and Guidelines

- 1 Entries can be made online at www.laca.co.uk and must be received no later than Friday 30th May 2025.
- 2 **Finishing Touches is open for entries in all classes on Wednesday 9th July 2025 ONLY.**
- 3 On arrival, please report to the Finishing Touches registration desk where you will be directed to your display table. The registration desk will be open from 8am on Wednesday 9th July.
- 4 There will be an area allocated for finishing dishes but this will not have any equipment or cooking facilities. All entries will be photographed prior to being moved to the display tables.
- 5 Each candidate will have a maximum area for presentation of 60cm x 60cm. Additional cloths and boxes for presentation may be used but only within the allocated space, any impediment of this will render points being deducted.
- 6 Judging of entries will take place from 10am on Wednesday 9th July. Entries received after 10am will still be displayed and judged.
- 7 All results will be displayed by the exhibits as soon as the judging of the category is complete. Awards will be given when the following standards are achieved:
 - ★ Gold Award 90% or more
 - ★ Silver Award 75% or more
 - ★ Bronze Award 65% or more
 - ★ Certificate of Merit 55% or more
- 8 **Best in Class and Best in Show Awards**
The Best in Class in all categories will be announced on Wednesday 9th July at 3pm.
The Best in Show entry will be announced on Wednesday 9th July at 4pm on the main conference stage. All Best in Class competitors are required to attend or send a representative in their place for the Best in Show announcement.
- 9 Entries can be removed from 4pm on Wednesday 9th July and no earlier. All entries should be removed no later than 4.30pm on the day; any items in the room after this time will be removed by the organisers and may be disposed of. Removal of the show pieces and all other items brought for finishing are the responsibility of the entrant.
- 10 Judges will be available for feedback after judging in the salon area.
- 11 A prize of £100 will be offered for each class and £250 for the overall Best in Show.

Important Information

- 1 Read the rules and guidelines carefully.
- 2 Ensure your entry meets the criteria of the class - it will not be judged if it deviates from the entry criteria and can't be moved to another class.
- 3 Read through the judging criteria on the next page and remember that every entry starts with full marks so devise your display piece to keep as many marks as possible at the judging stage.
- 4 If tasted, remember to serve fresh.
- 5 Think about textures and colours.
- 6 Balance of ingredients on the platter.
- 7 Clean the dish thoroughly before serving.
- 8 Use of nuts (with the exception of coconut) or alcohol is not permitted
- 9 Keep all the pieces even in size.
- 10 Make sure you have tasted your dishes during your practice sessions.
- 11 Ensure the dish is practical for production in a real working environment.
- 12 Ensure the dish is practical for service to the customer and can be eaten with ease.
- 13 Draw up a checklist of equipment and ingredients and use as a guide.
- 14 Allow plenty of time for travel, allowing for delays, parking, access and unloading.
- 15 Always ask judges for feedback, no matter what the result.
- 16 Remember judges are asked for their opinion on the basis of their experience. You may not always agree and it is only their opinion but if collectively they agree you may have to accept to differ. Learn at every opportunity from the feedback.
- 17 Make sure you make use of the finishing area at the venue to present dishes at their best and looking really fresh.

Judging Criteria - tasted classes

First Impression – 10 marks

- Visual Impact
- Regular in shape and size
- Edible garnishes

Meets Class Criteria - 15 marks

- Use of correct Ingredients/ % where requested
- Size of the piece
- Meets quantity of portions in brief
- Easily identifiable to meet the brief

Taste / Flavour / Preparation – 30 marks

- All flavours listed on menu are identifiable
- No overpowering flavours
- Correct and/or balance of textures
- Enjoyable eat factor

Workmanship / Execution / Presentation – 30 marks

- Skills shown in dish composition
- Well-cooked item
- Finishing of the dish to a high standard
- Even presentation of piece or pieces

Originality / Innovation – 15 marks

- Creative use of ingredients
- Balanced use of textures
- Clean and innovative presentation

Judging Criteria - non-tasted classes

First Impression – 15 marks

- Visual Impact
- Regular in shape and size
- Edible garnishes only
- Realistic looking garnish pieces

Meets Class Criteria - 20 marks

- Use of correct Ingredients/ % where requested
- Size of the piece meets criteria
- Meets quantity of portions in brief
- Easily identifiable to meet the brief
- No use of wire supports
- Single piece presented not multiple items

Workmanship / Execution / Presentation – 50 marks

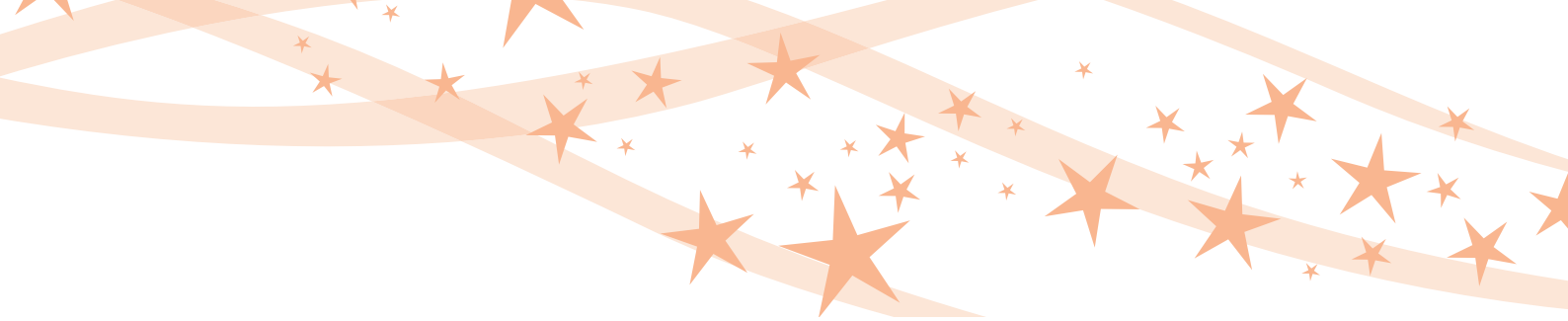
- Skills shown in piece composition
- Finishing of the piece to a high standard
- Even presentation of piece or pieces
- Piping even and consistent
- Different types of garnishing used
- Balanced use of colours
- Realistic sizes of garnish pieces
- Well covered/coated piece

Originality / Innovation – 15 marks

- Look for new ideas
- Creative use of ingredients
- Clean and innovative presentation



Enter for Finishing Touches online
www.laca.co.uk/finishing-touches
Entry deadline is Friday 30th May 2025



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CULINARY TALENT

2025

