



TOMATO GROWERS TASTE SUCCESS - 22/09/2009

Commercial growers triumphed in the Tastiest Tomato Competition at the wonderful West Dean Gardens near Chichester recently, taking the top places in all the categories judged together with the prize for the overall winner. Held during West Dean's famous Totally Tomato Show and organised by the British Tomato Growers' Association, the competition was open to everyone, amateur and professional, young and old. This is the third year the competition has been held. Stung by criticism that you can't buy good tasting tomatoes, the professional growers decided to put their reputations on the line and threw down the gauntlet in a taste challenge. In the first year, honours were pretty even between gentleman and players, gardeners and growers, but with the title going to a Hampshire gardener Roz Wilson, with an entry of Sungold. This made the professionals even more determined and last year they really piled on the pressure and, in a soggy summer, made the most of their facilities and skills to sweep the board.

Growers from the Isle of Wight returned across the Solent with the silverware, having been awarded the first three places, including the Len Summerton Cup for the winner, Paul Howlett. The cup for the winner of the competition was named in memory of Len, who had a life-long passion for growing tomatoes at his home in Southampton. His daughter Kate Armes contacted the TGA to see if a tomato variety could be named after him. Whilst this was not immediately possible, it triggered the idea for the competition. In the tomato world, size definitely isn't everything and cherry tomatoes were again found to be the pick of the crop by the panel of independent judges in 2008. So this year the competition was split into three categories for different sizes of fruit, cherry and baby plum types, cocktail and classic sized fruit and beefsteak. Winner of the cherry and baby plum category was Andy Roe of Flavourfresh Salads in Lancashire with an entry of baby plum Santini. In the cocktail and classic section, Brian Moralee of Wight Salads took the honours with Campari. Alan Taylor of Flavourfresh Salads brought home the bacon in the beefsteak competition with the exotic looking Kumato. Lifting the Len Summerton Cup as the overall winner was Andy Roe with Santini.





“Naturally we are delighted with the results,” said Julie Woolley of the TGA, ‘though this summer again hasn’t been great for growing tomatoes outside in the garden. It does prove that growing our crops in glasshouses as we do, we can produce a fantastic product, pretty much whatever the weather throws at us. When we attend shows we are told by the public that tomatoes don’t taste like they used to, but we actually think ours taste better and they are available if you look for the British label. The problem is that four out of five tomatoes now sold in this country are imported, a message that consumers really need to take on board if they want to continue to enjoy the best of British food.’

For more information and photographs of the event, please contact the British Tomato Growers’ Association on 01243 554859 or email tga@britishtomatoes.co.uk