



EXETER FESTIVAL OF SOUTH WEST ENGLAND FOOD & DRINK

Friday 11th April – Sunday 13th April 2008

Food lovers will relish the gastronomic delights at the largest ever **Exeter Festival of South West England Food & Drink**, celebrating the unbeatable quality and diversity of the South West's regional produce. Set among the beautiful surrounds of Northernhay Gardens and Exeter Castle, the region's most dynamic annual food and drink festival will take place between **Friday 11th April and Sunday 13th April 2008**, where over 100 regional producers will be showcasing their superb offerings.

The third South West Excellence conference will be at the heart of the festival focussing on the South West becoming a distinctive brand in the global market place. Featuring a wealth of international speakers, the conference will be staged on Thursday 10th April, in the cookery theatre for the first time, bringing the debate to the forefront of the Festival.

The Exeter Festival of South West England Food & Drink, organised by Taste of the West and funded by South West England, is supported by major sponsors and partners Exeter City Council, Exeter Castle, South West Tourism, Michael Caines @ Abode, Exeter Chamber of Commerce, Exeter & the Heart of Devon Hoteliers & Restaurant Association, National Farmers Union, Express & Echo, Taste of the West Ltd, One Voice Media and RH Advertising.

In March 2007, the festival attracted a record 16,000 visitors and in 2008 even more are expected thanks to some exciting new attractions. As the first of over 80 food festivals taking place across Britain in 2008, the festival will be the most vibrant, dynamic and exciting in its history, appealing to a diverse range of age groups with, quite literally, something delicious for everyone.

Michael Caines, Executive Chef at Gidleigh Park and operational Partner and Director of Abode boutique hotels, said '*The festival is an incredibly important event for both local producers and consumers and gives them a chance to sample the fantastic quality and range of food we have readily available on our doorstep in the Westcountry.*'

More/see over...

Councillor Peter Edwards, Leader of Exeter City Council - a major sponsor and partner of the Festival - said, *'We have supported the Festival from the very beginning and worked with our partners to develop new ideas every year. Buying food directly from the producer helps support the local economy and environment. We already have one of the areas biggest and most successful farmers markets and many of our restaurants and cafes are already committed to the use of local food. We are delighted to see the Festival grow and look forward to another successful year.'*

Located in the courtyard of Exeter Castle, an all new evening event will be the perfect way to relax after work or, for those hitting town, a great way to kick start a night out. An eclectic mix of live entertainment, cookery demonstrations, a beer festival and free tastings of the region's finest local produce will make for a great evening until late for all ages.

With the castle as a backdrop, the huge **celebrity cookery theatre** will seat up to 200 people, featuring over fifteen celebrity chefs to demonstrate the best in regional and seasonal cooking. Over the past four years, visitors have been treated to some outstanding culinary displays by some of the country's top chefs including Michael Caines, Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, Lesley Waters, James and Chris Tanner, Richard Guest and Chris Horridge.

Joining the cookery theatre in the Castle's courtyard will be **The South West England Beer Festival**. Ales of Devon are providing this popular attraction with the support of CAMRA – The Campaign For Real Ale – where visitors are guaranteed the opportunity to try some of the South West's top brews.

As part of the *Year of Food & Farming* - www.yearoffoodandfarming.org.uk - a dynamic feast of activities will be staged in the **'Food is Fun' Marquee**. Top chefs and producers will be presenting an exciting daily programme to tempt the whole family to enjoy, taste and learn more about food, farming and agriculture.

The popular **Festival Restaurant Trail** is back with some of the finest restaurants in the region offering special, regionally sourced menus, during and after the festival weekend. There really is no excuse to stay in and miss out on experiencing the South West's best culinary delights!

John Sheaves, Chief Executive of Taste of the West said, *'Now more than ever, The Exeter Festival of South West England Food & Drink is extremely important for the South West's food, drink and tourism industries. It's vital that we continue to introduce people of all generations to the region's local produce, especially considering more than 70% of people in the UK want to buy local or regional food. We hope to see and inspire even more people with the new attractions such as the new evening event, as well as the range of produce and amazing chef demonstrations at the Festival this year.'*

More/see over...

Tickets:

Special weekend tickets (3 days plus evening event) will allow dedicated 'foodies' the chance to savour the best local food and drink all weekend long – this are £10 each. For those looking to experience only the evening of entertainment and delicious food, tickets priced £3 will be available separately. Day entry will be £5 for adults (and for children over 16 years old).

Groups: for every 10 adult day tickets (£5 per person) purchased in bulk, 2 free tickets will be included.

The Exeter Festival of South West England Food & Drink 2008 will be located at Northernhay Gardens and Exeter Castle on Friday 11th April, Saturday 12th April and Sunday 13th April 2008. Northernhay Gardens and Exeter Castle are located in Exeter city centre just a few minutes walk from Exeter Central Station.

For more information about Exeter Festival of South West England Food & Drink 2008 visit www.visitsouthwest.co.uk/exeterfoodfestival or call 01392 440745.

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Notes to Editors

- ❖ The major sponsor and partner of the Exeter Festival of South West England Food & Drink is Exeter City Council.
- ❖ Other Festival 2008 sponsors include Michael Caines Restaurants, 3663, Clarke Willmott, Lionheart Marketing Communications.

For further press information or images, please contact Alexis Thornely or Jilly Greed on 01392 278801 or email pr@onevoicemedia.co.uk

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