

# Chef's game for taste challenge

Eugene McCluskey, the new head chef at Washbourne Court in Lower Slaughter, created some exciting dishes for British Sausage Week. **WEEKEND** went along to find out more

**T**HE humble sausage has had a bit of flak of late.

With some varieties criticised for being too fatty, full of unsavoury extras and a bit of a turn-off after the whole swine flu epidemic.

But British Sausage Week has been rallying support for the national dish by presenting banger awards to those who make sausages with flair.

Washbourne Court in Lower Slaughter decided to put its new head chef to the test by challenging him to make a different sausage-based dish every day this week to celebrate British Sausage Week.

Eugene, 24, who is originally from Cheshire, previously worked at Le Petit Blanc with Steve Burman and then Dave Aspin at Simply Heathcotes.

He says: "I don't like over-complicated, pretentious food – the key for me is the ingredients, I just cook from the heart and I love the idea of a challenge."

The recipes Eugene came up with were:

#### Washbourne game sausage

Partridge, pheasant, barley and venison served with watercress, game chips, rich gravy and bread sauce. This was accompanied by Battledown Porter.

#### Vegetarian glamorgan sausage

A potato-based sausage with mustard and leeks, wrapped in breadcrumbs, served with creamy mustard sauce and wild rocket.

#### Adam's Gloucestershire Old Spot pork and apple sausage

Served with mashed potato and onion gravy.

#### Cotswold lamb sausage

Served with crushed walnut potatoes and broad beans.

#### Beef and Horseradish sausage

Served with a stew of white beans, mushrooms and baby onions.

#### Black and white pudding

Served with sweet potato and roasted root vegetables.

#### Home made scotch eggs

Free range quails egg with local sausage meat, served with chef's homemade brown sauce.

His creations were at a Mash, Bangers, Wallop! event at the von Essen hotel on Monday and were matched with a



Head chef at Washbourne Court Eugene McCluskey with one of his dishes

specialty selected drink to complement the flavours.

BBC presenter and director of Cotswold Farm Park, Adam Henson, was also at the event to talk about the importance of using good quality, locally-sourced ingredients.

General manager, Chris Ling, said "Eugene has injected enthusiasm and passion into Eton's, our fine dining restaurant as well as building on our gastro experience at Scholars and this is reflected in his new menus."

"We're going to work together to ensure that Washbourne Court continues to deliver outstanding cuisine with a contemporary twist."

Eugene's Washbourne game sausage will feature on the menu at the hotel's Scholar's Lounge for the winter season.

■ For more information, call 01451 822143.



L-R: Adam Henson, butcher Bob Preston and Eugene McCluskey

## LOCAL FOOD HEROES

Picture: Eloisa Wildsmith 094947\_7



Stephen Wheeler, left, and Paul Keene

### STEPHEN WHEELER

commercial manager at speciality food company Mise en Place, now part of Cheltenham-based Creed Foodservice, is responsible for sourcing the best food ingredients for top chefs across the country

FARMING, they say, is a way of life, and the Keene family can certainly claim to have farming in the blood.

Paul Keene, of Primrose Vale in Bentham, can trace his farming roots back to 1709 when his ancestors were tenant farmers near Chepstow.

Fast forward 300 years and the Keene brothers are still farming; Paul owns the 35-acre Primrose Vale Fruit Farm on Shurdington Road, while his brother Rob runs Over Farm and Shop near Gloucester, which was started by their great grandparents as an arable farm.

When Paul took over the then A&A in 1999, both brothers were keen to implement a number of ideas they had seen work successfully in America – the business model of market gardening and selling direct to the public and caterers.

Paul set out to give the concept an English flavour, and between the two of them they now grow and market an amazing array of produce including root vegetables, brassicas, squashes, asparagus and soft fruit.

At Primrose Vale, Paul's largest crop is outdoor strawberries. More than 20 ton of this traditional English favourite are either sold as pick-your-own, in the thriving farm shop, or

sold to local wholesalers such as Mise en Place, which in turn sells the fruit to the best pubs, hotels and restaurants in the Cotswolds.

Good market gardening means making sure there's always something coming into season. Primrose Vale sold over 1,000 pumpkins grown on the farm, and is now moving onto the brassica patch featuring cabbages, kales and the unusual Cavelo Nero – or black cabbage. Originally grown in Italy, these long cabbage leaves are a favourite with top chefs.

"It's critical for my business to stay aware of trends in eating," says Paul.

Since opening for business, sales have quadrupled. Paul puts his success down to the growth in demand for high quality, locally produced food, at sensible prices.

"Our greatest challenge is now extending the seasons," he added.

"People want to buy fresh asparagus or raspberries for more than just a few weeks."

New varieties, good plant husbandry and warmer autumns all help.

Local Food Heroes such as the Keene brothers have earned their success through adapting their route to market, and supplying consistently great fresh fruit and vegetables.

*Mise en Place*  
THE SPECIALITY FOOD COMPANY