



Fairtrade in Solihull 2018

Case Study—Solihull Fairtrade Cake Off



History

In 2014 the Solihull Soroptimists decided to put on a 'bake off' to raise awareness of Fairtrade. They invited the Council and others to get involved in both the day and organising the event.

Since then it has been lead by Encore Café and Solihull Council, however with the support of Solihull Soroptimists.

This years event was the fifth, and the fourth to be hosted by The Core.

There were over 70 entrants this year and with over 200 since the first in 2014. It is estimated that over the 5 years over 400 people have engaged with the event and therefore been made more aware of Fairtrade.



Location

The first event was held courtesy of the Solihull Methodist Church in their community hall. This venue had plenty of space and resources (tables, staging etc), however struggled with limited parking.

The Core offered their studio for the next year and the event moved there. This has plenty of space, is in town so people can drop off their entries and right next to public car parks. The event was held in the Studio for the first two years and then moved to the Courtyard Gallery, an atrium used for displaying artwork, and a fantastic area to display the cakes.



Volunteers

The Soroptimists have a team of willing volunteers that they can call on, so provide the back bone to these events. There have also been volunteers from Solihull College and Solihull Positive Peers (a mental health support group) provided two volunteers to run a stall with the support our local Traidcraft representative.



We have been very lucky to attract some very good judges, from Hogarths Hotel and Hampton Manor Hotel *, including Pete Casson (from Purnells*), Andy Waters (Andy Waters Restaurant), Darryl Collins (ResortsWorld and finalist on Celebrity Bake Off), entrepreneur Claire of Claire's Quality Cakes and Amari Koryang (winner of CBBC Bake Off!). We were also grateful for judges from the Shirley Womens Institute and the Fairtrade regional representative for the Midlands.

(* Michelin starred restaurants)

What the winners say!

Olga Li, who runs a home-based pastry studio, won the show stopper category with her Fairtrade Chocolate Flamenco – a rich cake with a mirror glaze, she said:



“I think the Cake Off is a great initiative, especially for the children as it allows them to learn about Fairtrade and food sustainability in a really fun and engaging manner.

“As for me personally it was my first ever competition and I really enjoyed it.”



Debbie, who works at Solihull Hospital – won the teatime favourite with her triple layered banoffee cake. She was inspired to enter the competition after reading about last year's winner.

She said:

“I didn't know anything about the Solihull Fairtrade Cake Off until two friends linked me in on Facebook. I researched it from there and when I read Dayeeta's story I was inspired to enter, as like her I just enjoyed baking for family and friends.

“Never, ever, in my wildest dreams did I think I would be a winner. It was worth spending all day after my night shift making my bakes.”

Darcie, 11, from Lode Heath School, won the children's cake category, said:

“I've always been interested in baking and I'm doing a cake decorating course at Solihull College.

Other organisations

Health Exchange and our Public Health Team used the event to put on a food advice stall with a smoothie bike.

In the past commercial organisations have paid to join the event, however while the footfall is good for an event, there is not necessarily enough trade to make a stall worthwhile. Stalls and demonstrations including: Icing World, The Body Shop at Home, The Sugar Craft School, Lakeland, Deborah's Adorable Cakes.

Communications

Promotion was handled by the organising team with support from the Council's Communications Team who amongst other things, got the promotional press release picked up by the Facebook page Solihull Updates. The pre-event promotion was seen locally by the community with over 800 comments on the day it was posted resulting in over 50 people entering on the day, and 100 people over the week – this translated into 60 entrants on the day.

We have been lucky enough to get the event recorded by both photographers and videomakers/t.v, including; Made in Birmingham/Big Centre TV reporters, CMA Video, Reeleyez Video, Solihull Photography Club, invited amateurs/friends (with point and click), volunteers co-opted on the day.

Public Competition—Cake Off

The competition requires that entrants use two Fairtrade ingredients, and in every other respect it is a normal cake competition. An additional element introduced in 2017 was the Fairtrade Award. This award was given to the entrants who presented information about Fairtrade in an interesting and engaging way. There have been many carefully made and beautifully presented posters and booklets that have accompanied the cake entries. Any method could be used, so poems and performances have been presented to great effect. A poem by the winner was read out at the 2017 event, and two children performed a short play about Fairtrade in front of the whole audience. The prize for this was equivalent to all the others, to demonstrate the importance of this aspect.



Schools Competition—Bake Off

Solihull Catering Services were invited to get involved in the 2017 event, and liked it so much they decided that they would like a Schools Bake Off. Schools were invited to have heats and send their best bakers to the final, alongside the public Cake Off. Ten schools took part, 3 secondary, 6 primary's and 1 infant with over 100 children competing and 16 entrants on the day.



Funding

There is very little spent and that is split between 'additional prizes' and printing costs. This has come from the Council's Fairtrade budget and the Fairtrade Group's funds. The rest of the event is put on with donations of time, resources (room) and prizes.

In 2015 The Core lead on the event and tried to cover some of the costs of staging the event, so there was a nominal charge to enter and stalls were charged for attendance. Whilst the event was a success for both entrants and The Core, the costs of running it were not adequately recouped, and leadership reverted back to the community and the Fairtrade Officer.

Contributions from:

