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TOP AUSSIE BACON BRINGS HOME THE SIZZLE

It's the chocolate of meat, its aroma gets tastebuds excited and this week it's all about bacon!

Australian Bacon Week runs from 21-27 June celebrating 100% Australian bacon, but also drawing attention to the competition local bacon faces from imported product.

Australian Pork Limited's Peter Haydon said bacon was about enjoyment for many people and an integral ingredient of many favourite dishes.

"Bacon is so versatile we find it's part of dishes from dawn until dusk and from starters to sweets," Mr Haydon said.

"Bacon made from 100% Australian pork is a high quality product that many people believe tastes better and Bacon Week is about shining a light on this homegrown product.

"Many people are shocked to learn that more than 70 per cent of bacon sold in Australia is made from imported pork and so it's also about sharing the tips on how to identify Aussie. The pink PorkMark logo or the words 'Product of Australia' mean the bacon is true blue."

Bacon captures the imagination of many people and a range of innovative products and dishes have been created for Bacon Week by chefs, dessert makers and more, including Gelato Messina and Adriano Zumbo.

As part of celebrations, Australia's bacon was put to the test in the Australian Bacon Awards. Three specialist judges independently scrutinized the entries for appearance, flavor and other characteristics. Judges fleischmeister Horst Schurger, who has a Masters degree in butchering and smallgoods; experienced judge and chef, Simon Bestley, and Australian Pork's Mitch Edwards, assessed 135 entries over two days.

For the second consecutive year, the judges named Pialligo Estate Smokehouse Australia's Best Artisan Bacon. The dry cured and smoked shortcut rashers produced by the Canberra company were described by the judges as beautifully marbled, with a nice smoky aroma and a nice balanced taste.

Bertocchi Smallgoods also became a back-to-back winner, taking home the Best Nationally Available Bacon. This year they impressed judges with their Bertocchi Brothers' Long Rindless Hickory Smoked Bacon, which is available in the chilled aisle of Coles stores. The judges said it had the perfect aroma with a nice, gentle smokiness, minimal shrinkage and a great balanced taste.

Bacon Week runs until 27 June, with more information, participating restaurants and recipes available from www.pork.com.au

And the winners are...

Australia's Best Artisan Bacon

Pialligo Estate Smokehouse dry cured and smoked shortcut bacon, Pialligo Estate, ACT 0406 690 369

Australia's Best Nationally Available Bacon

Bertocchi Brothers Long Rindless Hickory Smoked Bacon, Bertocchi Smallgoods (03) 9355 5114

National Winners

Full Rasher

1. Southlands Quality Meats	Mawson ACT	(02) 6286 2993
2. Country Meats Lismore	Lismore NSW	0418 429 761
3. Circle T Meats	Raceview QLD	(07) 3288 6788

Shortcut

1. Pialligo Estate	Pialligo ACT	0406 690 369
2. Campbell's Superior Meats	West Pymble NSW	0403 787 411
3. Meat on Melville	Numurkah VIC	0403 651 564

ENDS

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