

Lisdoon pub goes wild for Michelin Bib Gourmand

Nicola Corless

A NORTH Clare pub has become the first in the country to win a prestigious Michelin Bib Gourmand.

The award for Wild Honey Inn in Lisdoonvarna is a breakthrough for pub dining in Ireland. The Bib Gourmand is awarded for good food at moderate prices and only seven were awarded this year in Ireland, the other six going to restaurants. The pub will now feature in the 2010 Michelin Guide to Great Britain and Ireland.

Wild Honey Inn is owned by chef Aidan McGrath and his family. The Mayo man, who has worked in Clare for the past 15 years, opened the doors just eight months ago.

“It is good to be recognised for doing what we do here and it is good to get it at this time especially, in the present climate and at the start of our second year,” Aidan told *The Clare Champion*.

The pub specialises in seasonal, local and organic produce, served in a casual environment.

“The award recognises us for doing good food at a reasonable price. It is for quality ingredients and good flavours and consistency. We are the only establishment in Clare with one and the only pub in Ireland with one. It is mainly restaurants that get them. A lot of pubs are doing food but are tending towards restaurant-style food but we are doing what I think pub food should be, based on the English model of the gastro pub. Chefs would take over a pub, leave the comfort of a hotel restaurant where they might have a Michelin star, they would go out on their own and start doing rustic style food in a pub environment. That is what I see it as and I think we are hitting or trying to hit that mark,” Aidan continued.

Starting a business in a country gripped by recession is something that Aidan believes has worked out well so far.

“There is never a good time or a bad time to start a business. If you see an opportunity you just have to go for it but you need to know what your costs are and make sure you have a long-term plan to ride through the storm. The other side to starting now is that you are starting from the very bottom, you have to keep your margins tight but then you grow with the economy,” he pointed out.

The pub is closed for the month of January but will reopen on February 12.

Twenty-eight new establishments across the UK and Ireland were named as Bib Gourmands in 2010. The total number now stands at 131.



King of the road... Aidan McGrath of the Wild Honey Inn, Lisdoonvarna, which received the Bib Gourmand Michelin Award.

Photograph by John Kellan