



# Minutes of the 2012 Annual General Meeting of the Guild of Food Writers

The meeting was held at Portcullis House, London SW1A 2LW, at 6.30pm on Thursday 22 March 2012. There were 56 members present, 8 fewer than in 2011. There were 58 apologies. Minutes of the last AGM were approved.

## ***Minutes of the last meeting***

The minutes of the last AGM were approved.

## ***Report from the Secretary***

Secretary Jane Hughes reported that the Guild had 423 members. Since the last AGM, the Committee had organised the annual Lecture Dinner, the annual Awards Party, two regional members' lunches in York and Suffolk, and twelve workshops, which were detailed as follows:

- ☞ A workshop on Pepper last March, given by Guild member Christine McFadden
- ☞ An Organoleptic Odyssey in April
- ☞ A look at the Hidden Food of Italy in May, with Guild member Katie Caldesi
- ☞ A look at Scandinavian food in June
- ☞ A Supermarket Brains Trust in September, chaired by Guild member Sheila Dillon with Guild members Tim Hayward, Alex Renton and Zoe Williams among the panellists.
- ☞ A chocolate tasting workshop in September, tutored by Guild member Sarah Jane Evans
- ☞ A workshop called Cured! at the Charcuterie Festival at Southbank Centre Square, presented by Guild member Lindy Wildsmith in October
- ☞ Also in October, a workshop on new British gin producers
- ☞ A talk on The Food of the Silver Screen given by Guild member Jenny Hammerton in December
- ☞ A workshop called Beyond the Beeryani, held at the Bombay Brasserie in January
- ☞ A special tour at the National Gallery, focusing on food in art, in February
- ☞ A Spanish Ham School Workshop at Borough Market in March.

The events and workshops had been popular, with just over 50% of members attending at least one event. Committee member Kate Hawkings, who was stepping down at the AGM, was thanked for her work on organising workshops, as were her colleagues Joan Ransley and Silvija Davidson. Members were encouraged to contact the Committee with ideas for workshops and offers of venues.

The Guild's website was undergoing a planned improvement. The site had received 30,000 visitors since the last AGM. Members were encouraged to offer feedback about the website to the Committee.

Two new Awards had been instituted – Best Food Blogger and Best Food Magazine or Magazine Supplement. Emma Sturgess and Jennifer John, who had worked hard to organize the awards and raise sponsorship, and were both stepping down at the AGM, were thanked for their hard work.

## ***Report from the Treasurer***

Treasurer Anne Benson was standing down and unable to attend the AGM. She was thanked for her contribution to the Committee. A copy of the audited accounts was given to members attending.

## ***Report from the Chair***

Chair Lewis Esson told the meeting that the Guild had had a good year, both financially and in terms of activities. Paperless communications helped to keep costs down, and Administrator Jonathan Woods was thanked for his hard work over the year. The number of members had risen, and membership was now attractive to beginners, top names and re-joiners. The Guild's awards were gaining prominence, with more entries and a popular and newsworthy annual party. As well as instituting two new awards, the Guild was now offering cash prizes to award winners. The Guild had run more workshops than ever, appealing to a broad range of members. The Lecture Dinner had been a success. The Chair told the meeting that the Committee was working to continue to improve the awards and workshops and to increase membership. The Guild now had a well-supported presence on Twitter and Linked-In and a workshop on using social media was scheduled to be held on 4 April 2012.

## **Results of Committee Election**

There were four vacancies on the Committee and as four members were standing, there was no election. The four members duly elected were Jane Gifford (proposed by Clarissa Hyman and seconded by Lewis Esson), Signe Johansen (proposed by Richard Ehrlich and seconded by Silvija Davidson), Jane Milton (proposed by Richard Ehrlich and seconded by Lewis Esson) and Andrew Webb (proposed by Heather Grant and seconded by Tracey Barker).

## **Resolutions**

No resolutions were proposed.

## **Any Other Business**

Chair Lewis Esson told the meeting that one loan had been made to a member from the Guild's benevolent fund during the year, and an agreed repayment schedule was in place.

Member Kaori O'Connor asked if Guild members could co-operate to sell unwanted books. Jane Gifford reminded members of the Guild about the Food Library. Members also discussed the Jane Grigson library, the GFW Collection at the Guildhall Library, and selling books via Amazon.

Member Sally Cox asked to what extent the Guild should be a campaigning organization, for example to try to restore cookery to the school curriculum. Committee members replied that although the Guild occasionally sends letters from the Chair in response to relevant events, overall the Guild strives to remain impartial so that members are not assumed to have any particular views on contentious issues. Effective campaigning would also require more time from the Committee, which was already working hard. The Guild supports the campaigning work of Sustain. The Guild's two competitions for children, Cook It and Write It, were also forms of campaigning work.

President Jane Sutherland reminded members that Cook-It was now in its tenth year, with one month to go before the deadline for entries. Cook-It was sponsored by Gold Top and now also partnered by Electrolux, who also had a mobile demonstration kitchen which might be of interest to members. Write-It was now in its third year and was supported by Delicious magazine. Members were urged to support these two activities.

The Committee was thanked for keeping subscription charges at the same level for the past year, and also for the high quality of workshops. The Committee agreed to continue to control workshop costs to ensure that they remained affordable for as many members as possible.