



# Minutes of the 2018 Annual General Meeting of the Guild of Food Writers

The meeting was held on 29 April 2019 at Westminster Kingsway College, Vincent Square, London SW1P 2PD.

## ***President's Welcome***

Xanthe Clay welcomed everyone to the AGM for the very last time in her role of President of the Guild. 45 members were present at this year's AGM compared to 46 in 2018. There were 32 apologies.

Xanthe thanked everyone for coming to the AGM which is vital to the Guild's existence. She praised the members for the friendship and support they provide each other which is all the more important as so many food writers work on a freelance basis.

## ***Minutes of 2018 AGM***

The minutes of the last AGM were proposed, seconded and approved by the meeting.

## ***Secretary's Report***

Sam Bilton reported that membership has increased to 547 this year, an increase of 20 from the previous year. 33 people have joined or rejoined the Guild.

Xanthe commented on the wonderful workshops the Guild organises which 'feed our passion'. 190 members have attended at least one of the events held in the last 12 months. In 2018 these included events on Raw Milk, Butter and Cream and Martinis as well as those geared more towards professional development such as the Squarespace Professional Masterclass. There was also an interesting autumn lecture provided by Tim Spector on Food, Diet and Gut Microbes.

115 members attended another successful awards ceremony in 2018. Following this event the committee reviewed the format of the awards and made some small alterations to the categories with a few being renamed e.g. Food Blog and Social Media. The most significant change has been to the General Cookbook Category. In the past this has attracted over 120 entries which is quite an undertaking to judge. This has been separated into three categories: General Cookbook; International or Regional Cookbook and Specialist or Single Subject Cookbook. Response from authors and publishers has been very positive and there has been a wide variety of entries for this year's awards. The short lists will be issued during May 2019 with the awards ceremony taking place on 27 June 2019 at Studio Spaces in London.

The Guild has also received a record number of entries for the Pink Lady Write It Competition. Following a review of the entries by committee members a short list of five entries per age category will be sent to the judges in May. The winner will be announced prior to the Guild's Awards in June.

2018/19 has seen a number of changes to Guild communications. The Facebook Forum has provided a relaxed, friendly space where everyone's questions are answered speedily and with great verve, and new ideas tossed out and discussed on an hourly basis. There are over 3000 interactions every month on every topic imaginable, from home-grown honey to how to pitch an article (which will be the topic of a workshop in May 2019 following the response on the Forum). The newsletter has been re-invigorated with a host of new features including 'how to use your Guild Press Card' and 'What I do in my job as a Guild Committee Member.' Please take advantage of the inclusive and informative natures of both these platforms, and contribute whatever you can.

Several Guild members have volunteered to help manage our presence on Instagram and Twitter. Interaction with the Guild can be increased by including #gfw on your tweets or Instagram posts. Following the success of the Instagram project in 2017 a similar project is planned for Autumn 2019.

## ***Treasurer's Report and Presentation of Accounts***

This year, we have ended with a financial deficit of just over £9,000. This is mainly due to a combination of the increased operating costs of the awards and the remainder of the costs associated with updating the website.

In the past, the awards have managed to break-even or turn a small profit. Last year, due to increased operating costs, stagnant sponsorship income, and fewer ticket sales, we ran at a loss of approximately £7,000.

Fortunately, thanks to the fantastic efforts of the sponsorship team and all the committee associated with the Awards, we are looking to be in a much better position for the year ahead.

The Awards are one of the highlights of the Guild calendar and an important opportunity for us to celebrate the excellent work of food writers and broadcasters.

The website costs in 2017 were around £17,000, this year they are down to £12,000, which is significantly more than two years ago but the bulk of the work has now been accomplished, which puts us in a better position moving forward.

In any case, the deficit is not a problem because the Guild runs a healthy balance at the bank.

As a whole, sponsorship was up on 2017, due to the Pink Lady collaboration. Our sponsorship team do an excellent job, which is no easy feat in such challenging times. Ticket sales for events and workshops were slightly down.

Income from membership was stationary though we are seeing a keen interest in the Guild. We will also be looking to introduce the option of direct debit to make the collection of Membership Fees much easier.

Workshops continue to be a successful area of activity. Thanks to the hard work of the committee team involved, members benefit from a wide range of events at a significantly reduced price. As a whole, the Guild covered over 50% of the costs associated with workshops.

The range of activities reflects not only the hard work of the committee, but the generosity of our members and this up-coming year should prove to be an even more exciting time for Workshops.

In general, operating costs remain similar to the previous year, and we must thank our Administrator for his hard work managing the costs and accounts.

Looking ahead, we are hopeful the coming year will bring the same positive financial outcomes.

## ***Chair's Report***

The Guild Chairs Angela Clutton and Genevieve Taylor thanked the committee for their efforts over the past year. A heartfelt thank you was extended to Xanthe Clay and Clarissa Hyman who are standing down from their roles as President and Vice President respectively. Both were presented with a Japanese knife as a token of the Guild's appreciation.

The Chairs welcomed the incoming President, Orlando Murrin and Vice President, Felicity Cloake, who are both looking forward to their new roles.

Some valued members of the Committee are stepping down after their four year tenure: Angela Clutton, Linda Duffin, Silvija Davidson, Justine Pattison and Christine Smallwood. Genevieve Taylor will continue in the role of Chair on her own. The chairs welcomed new committee members Kristen Friederickson, Helen Hokin, Joy Skipper, Sam Gates and Stephanie Jackson. They also said a big thank you to Jonathan Woods who keeps the Guild running.

## ***Any Other Business***

Nothing to report.

The meeting was followed by an entertaining talk from Guild member Niki Segnit on her new book *Lateral Cooking*. Thank you to the members who provided the delicious food for the event ensuring once again the the Guild of Food Writers AGM was anything but bland!