

Andrew Ridewood crowned Sodexo Chef of the Year 2025

1 year ago



Andrew Ridewood has been named [Sodexo](#) Chef of the Year 2025 following a live cook-off held at Food Sorcery Cookery & Barista School in Didsbury.

Andrew a chef in Sodexo's Schools & Universities business, triumphed in the grand finale, where seven of Sodexo's top culinary talents competed in a thrilling two-hour live cook-off. The competition celebrated the creativity, expertise, and passion within Sodexo's culinary community across the UK and Ireland.

This year's event focused on [sustainable eating](#), challenging chefs to create three innovative, plant-based dishes that highlighted both creativity and sustainability:

- Grab-and-Go Boxed Salad: A tasty plant-based salad featuring at least two Future50 ingredients, combining sustainability with on-the-go convenience.
- Main Course: A plant-based main using fresh, locally sourced British or Irish ingredients, designed to impress as a chef's special or brasserie-style entrée.
- Street Food: A handheld, seasonal street food dish bursting with bold flavours, easy to eat and packed with innovation.

Andrew's winning menu included:

- Wasabi dressed seaweed salad.
- Cider braised leek with wild mushroom crumb, truffled cashew crème, pink apple purée, parsnip crisps, crispy kale & sage oil.
- Kale pakoras, red lentil and coconut dhal, cumin pickled red cabbage, orange tomato kachumber salad.

Andrew's prize includes an all-expenses-paid trip to the Global Launch Event for Future Menu 2025 in Wageningen, Netherlands.

The competition crowned a winner in each category: Joshua Thompson from Sodexo's Government business for their grab-and-go salad and overall winner Andrew Ridewood for their main course and street food dish. Anthony Dye from Sodexo's Corporate Services business won the Food Safety Award.

Prizes for the category winners included a development day with the Veg Express team, including a professional photoshoot of their dish for the Veg Express recipe bank, a behind-the-scenes factory visit at Churchill's Stoke-on-Trent facility to witness the plate-making process and its environmental innovations, and a full development day on a British farm with Fresh Direct, visiting a produce grower and potentially exploring vertical farming

In preparation for the event, the finalists attended a mentor day, where the mentor judging panel got a first look at their dishes and provided constructive feedback to help refine them for the live cook-off. Additionally, the finalists were evaluated on their food safety practices in preparation for the final by Health, Safety, Environment, and Quality (HSEQ).

The competition judges included top culinary experts:

- Ian Nottage, Executive Development Chef, Sysco.
- James Brown, Unilever Executive Chef.
- Barnaby MacAdam, Executive Chef, Paulig Pro.
- Dan Blucert, Development Chef, Vegetarian Express.

- Rachael Elliott, Sodexo HSEQ.

The finalists' creations were evaluated not only on taste but also on their alignment with Sodexo's commitment to healthy, sustainable, and delicious food. Cumulative scores across all three dishes determined the winner of the coveted title, Chef of the Year 2025.

The other finalists were:

- Paige Flynn, Sodexo Live!
- Dermot Staunton, Corporate Services, Ireland
- Chris Ormshaw, Energy & Resources
- Bruno Boris Bilota, Health & Care

All seven finalists received a year's membership to the Craft Guild of Chefs in addition to a special finalists' chef jacket and certificate.

Matt Hay, Head of Culinary at Sodexo UK & Ireland said: "This competition is a true celebration of the talent, passion, and innovation within Sodexo's culinary community. Each year, our chefs rise to the challenge, not only displaying their technical expertise but also embracing our commitment to sustainable eating.

"The seven finalists exemplified the best of Sodexo, pushing boundaries to create plant-based dishes that were as sustainable as they were creative. Competing in a high-pressure live cook-off, in front of esteemed judges and peers, is no easy feat, and each finalist should be incredibly proud of their achievement.

"Congratulations to Andrew for their outstanding dishes and for claiming the title of Sodexo Chef of the Year 2025. This competition reflects the strength of our culinary community and our ongoing dedication to delivering innovative, sustainable food experiences."

This announcement follows two recent successes for Sodexo chefs. In January 2025, Calum Smith, who works at Shrewsbury School for Independents with Sodexo, claimed the Junior Chef of Wales title after beating three rival chefs in the final at the Welsh International Culinary Championships (WICC).

In November 2024, Adam Collison, Head Chef at Alderley Park, highlighted Sodexo's commitment to sustainability by winning the 2024 Sodexo Cook for Change! global competition with a standout plant-based dish, demonstrating how sustainable food can balance taste, creativity, and environmental

