



Which Gets Your Vote - Lasagne Or Steak And Kidney Pie?

THE oven gloves are off at a Stratton pub after the landlady and her assistant chef went head to head to decide who cooked the most popular pub dish. Landlady and head chef at The Bakers Arms, Catherine Kelly, pitted her steak and kidney pie against her assistant chef Laura Medlam's lasagne in a competition to be crowned queen of the kitchen. If they were competing in the sticky toffee pudding stakes, Catherine admits Laura would win hands down, as she says Laura's pudding is just a bit tastier, but the feisty landlady is determined that she's the best steak and kidney pie maker in Swindon. I cook my meat in the sauce a day before I make the pastry so all the flavours can really come out, she said. And of course it's loaded with a few delicious extras that I'm not telling anyone about, least of all Laura. Catherine has reason to be secretive. She took Laura on a few months ago as a trainee chef and it didn't take her long to discover her new employee's talent. She's got a natural ability to cook tasty food, she said. She's great to work with and, along with the third member of our kitchen, Viv McMurrey who is our dessert queen, we all get on so well that The Baker's Arms is a really lovely place to work. We're a town pub that does great home-cooked food for really appreciative local customers and we're proud of it. The steak and kidney pie versus Laura's lasagne was put to the test this week and, for now at least, the pie won hands down, selling out at lunchtime, while there were a few portions of lasagne left. Catherine, who has been in the licensed trade for 30 years, is also celebrating ten years at The Baker's Arms this year. The pub, owned by Arkell's Brewery, was extended a few years ago to provide a larger dining area for up to 60 people. But Catherine's skills don't just stop at steak and kidney – she is also particularly proud of her roast dinners. My roast potatoes come straight out of the oven. I'm proud of their crispiness, she said.

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