

## ALL IRELAND QUALITY POTATO CHAMPIONSHIPS

### BY RAYMOND HIGGINS

The potato is widely thought to have been introduced to Ireland in 1586 by an American, Sir Walter Raleigh. The potatoes grown by Raleigh were not the potatoes we know today. Raleigh's potato was a sweet potato and some people believe that the potato as we know it was not introduced into Ireland until 1590, when it was first planted by a shipwrecked Spanish sailor. Whatever way it happened in reality, potato-growing spread very quickly to many parts of Ireland and it remains Ireland's number one carb and sales are still far ahead of alternatives such as pasta and rice.



The Bord Bia All Ireland Quality Potato Championships are held annually at the Tullamore Show in the heart of Ireland. The



competition is designed to increase the level of awareness among growers of what constitutes a good quality potato. It is estimated that a total of 9,800 hectares of potatoes are grown by an estimated 540 growers in Ireland.

This competition is over 20 years old. It's

become the highlight of the growing and showing season within Ireland. The perpetual Bord Bia Cup has the names of many of Ireland's great growers engraved onto its base and the first prize of €250.00



along with bragging rights of growing the best Potatoes in Ireland make this competition special.



So what makes the perfect Spud and what does the judge look for?

### The rules of the competition are as follows:

Each exhibit is to consist of the following: A dish of 6 potatoes of any variety. The variety to be correctly named. Each tuber should be free from skin blemishes, be true to type, and weigh approximately 6 ozs. (170g). This being a quality championship, the adjudicators will favour floury, high dry matter varieties, which are popular with the Irish

customer.

The judging criteria is extensive with marks given for different merits in each dish from a total of a 100 points with one potato from each dish being cut in half to determine its High Dry Matter



- 1) **Cloth** Must be covered with a large/moist and dark cloth to exclude all light, **5 marks**
- 2) **Name** - correct spelling / appropriate size **5 marks**
- 3) **Dish** - must aid the presentation **5 marks**
- 4) **Presentation** Garnish (Parsley) Each potato must be displayed with rose end(Eyes) out **5 marks**
- 5) **Variety** (traditional Irish) **10 marks**
- 6) **Shape and uniformity** **10 marks**
- 7) **Eyes** (through to type but shallow eyes preferred) **10 marks**
- 8) **Weight** approx 6 oz **10 marks**
- 9) **External condition** **20 marks**
- 10) **Internal condition** dry matter (The judge cuts one potato) **20 marks**

As stated the judge will cut one of the potatoes to check for any internal issues and also to make sure the variety is as named. In doing so they will also check for dry matter. The two halves of the potato are rubbed together and then examined to see how much foam is



produced. It's the only way to check Dry Matter without cooking. Remember we Irish love floury Spuds.



This competition is organised through the Irish Shows Association. Each finalist must qualify at a local show to reach the final so no direct entries to Tullamore Show. The criteria for judging can be obtained from the show secretary.

This year the final

will be held on Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> of August. There are 10 other potato classes (Direct Entry) covering cooked potatoes, seed potatoes and non-commercial traditional varieties.

I would encourage anyone growing vegetables in Ireland to have a go and enter the



competition this year. For more details of rules and qualifying please see

Tullamore Show [www.tullamoreshow.com](http://www.tullamoreshow.com)

Irish Shows Association [www.irishshows.org](http://www.irishshows.org)



#### 2014 Results

1. Margaret **McGoldrick**  
Kilcoosey, Dromahaire, Co. Leitrim.
2. David **Curren**  
Moyglass, Fethard, Clonmel, Co.  
Tipperary.
3. Michael **McGoldrick**  
Kilcoosey, Dromahaire, Co Leitrim.
4. Raymond **Higgins**  
Liberty, Ballydangan, Athlone, Co.  
Roscommon.
5. Thomas **Carr**  
Dublin Road, Kilbeggan, Co.  
Westmeath.
6. Michael **Walton**  
Kilmacowen, Ballisodare, Co. Sligo.



It's time to get sowing and remember it must be an Irish Variety!

Best of Luck

Ray