

TWO HAWKE'S BAY FINALISTS IN THE 2008 MASSEY UNIVERSITY FOOD AWARDS

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Massey University

Two Hawke's Bay companies have been named as finalists in the 2008 Massey University Food Awards. They include Country Culinaire Limited for their Chocolate and Raspberry Pudding and Silver Trail Limited for their Silver Trail Snails, New Zealand's first commercially farmed snails. These products are among 45 finalists in the awards, including a tart cherry juice that helps you sleep, vodka jellies and a smart cookie that gets the Heart Foundation tick.

The biennial awards recognise the country's most cutting-edge new food and drink products, championing innovation and excellence. "The finalists' line up shows that small businesses are leading the way with product innovation," says head judge Allyson Gofton. "There are a lot of small food businesses, many of them entrepreneurs, doing some truly creative things and it's great to see such strong innovation.

"The most notable trend among this year's finalists is that food products are crossing over to the functional food and nutrition arena, some are even medicinal, and this is something that will grow enormously in future," she says.

"The finalists also suggest there is a growing drive to meet specialist consumer demand for free-from, organic or preservative-free products." People living with celiac disease will be happy with offerings that include gluten-free pikelet, waffle, bread, baking and pastry mixes.

"It is great to see that a number of products targeted directly at school tuck shops, providing healthy snack options that are good for kids and still taste delicious," Gofton says. Tuck-shop-focused finalists include the smart cookie, based on the Cookie Time favourite, which is the first sweet biscuit in NZ to achieve the Heart Foundation tick, and Sooshi, a sushi snack pack designed to make the healthy lunch option available to school canteens. Innovation in packaging is also a focus as food companies take a more holistic approach to their products and their impact on the environment.

The finalists will be scrutinised by a panel of food industry experts to find the winners in 20 categories from which one supreme winner will be selected. The Awards will culminate in a gala dinner in October 2008 when the winners will be announced.