



# The PRIDE of the stadium kitchen

The lunch at this year's 10th *Pride of Reading* awards was cooked by a trio of delicious chefs. **HILARY SCOTT** went behind the scenes with them

**W**HEN the ninth *Pride of Reading* awards finished last year and TV chef Daniel Galmiche was leaving he turned to me and said: "I know how to make the 10th year special. I will cook – as long as Antony does it too."

Antony, of course, referred to Antony Worrall Thompson, legendary chef and, like Daniel, a supporter of *Pride of Reading* since the start.

So as we began planning our 10th year celebrations, we asked Antony and he said yes.

*Pride of Reading* is all about honouring our unsung heroes but it's also about giving money to our host Chris Tarrant's charity Children with Cancer, so there was no budget – and the chefs were doing it out of the goodness of their hearts.

On the day of the awards I was asked lots of times what we'd paid them – and made it quite clear they were doing it for nothing. And that was so appreciated – because it's not just about turning up and cooking on the day.

Catering for near on 330 people takes a bit of planning.

First, of course, we had to ask the man whose kitchen we would be invading – Scott Iremonger of the Royal Berkshire Conference Centre – and David Reed, general manager at the centre, they'd be delighted, they said.

So meetings took place, mostly at Antony's The Greyhound pub, costings talked about, ingredients discussed.

Each chef would take a separate course – Antony the starter, Daniel the main and Scott the dessert.

Busy Daniel even popped into the kitchen at

Madejski Stadium on his way to work at The Vineyard in Stockcross to take a look around well before the awards.

David held everything together, negotiating with suppliers, talking to the chefs, explaining patiently to chair of *Pride of Reading* Sally Swift and me how the buying in of ingredients worked – and despite a few dramas with chickens (I couldn't possibly give anything away but major thanks to The Village Butchers in Tilehurst for their refrigerated van and help) and ingredients ("how many walnuts?") the day dawned and the chefs were in the kitchen at 7am to prepare.

The menu (far right) was superb. There was nowhere on that day you could have eaten better. The starter dishes, served family style, just kept coming – and they encouraged everyone at their tables to chat as they passed round Antony's dishes.

I had sneaked in to the kitchen during the service so got a taste of Daniel's supremely tender and sweet Cotswold white chickens with the sweetcorn puree and barbecued sweetcorn. Amazing.

And Scott's rhubarb trifle dessert was elegant and a fabulous balance of flavours. There were so many added extras to it it really was a delight.

Said Daniel: "It's been a pleasure to be there and cook for that very special occasion."

Antony echoed that: "It was a great pleasure to be asked to be involved."

Meanwhile the guys who welcomed us all with open arms loved the experience. "We'd certainly do it again," said David. "We thoroughly enjoyed it."



## Pride of Reading 10th Anniversary Awards Lunch

### Antony's Antipasti

A selection of Mediterranean small dishes (North African squash and chickpea stew, peppers stuffed with beans, couscous salad with herbs and walnuts, roast beetroots with hazelnut and yogurt dressing, tahini dressed courgette and green bean salad, marinated cucumber with mint)

### Daniel's Chicken

Slow cooked breast of corn-fed free-range Cotswold white chicken, braised hispy cabbage, corn puree, popcorn and chicken jus

### Scott's Trifle

Rhubarb and sherry trifle, rhubarb puree and honeycomb, pistachio butter cream and candied rhubarb



Clockwise from top left: Scott, Daniel and Antony; Daniel with his chef de partie Jonathan Chauvin; Daniel's chicken; preparing the barbecued sweetcorn; Antony and Daniel; Antony's chefs make the green bean and courgette salad; Antony and Daniel and the press inside the kitchen