

PARKSIDE FARM CLAIMS NATIONAL PICK-YOUR-OWN AWARD

Parkside Farm off the Hadley Road towards Enfield, has been named the national 'Pick-your-own Farm of the Year' 2011 by the National Farmers' Retail & Markets Association (FARMA).

The announcement was made on Tuesday 25 January at the FARMA Awards' ceremony in Bournemouth Pavilion, Dorset, as part of the farm diversification event, FARM & MORE 2011.

Chairman of the FARMA judges, Mike Blee (himself a former PYO farmer), praised the high quality and presentation of the produce, and the "total dedication to growing which is behind the success of this busy PYO operation. The incredibly high standard of husbandry given to such a range of crops is extraordinary."

Parkside Farm also won the title in 2009 and remains a leading example of today's PYO farms. Spanning 50 acres, the site is open for the public to pick a range of crops from June to mid-October. The site is well laid out, with best-picking areas clearly signposted, and the crops well maintained. Despite being within a few miles of London, the farm provides a sense of having left the city far behind for a pleasurable day in the countryside.

The owners, and their team combine modern and traditional methods for the best customer experience. On entering the site, customers are confronted with a stunning view: 15km of table tops strawberries in neat rows. Grown in substrate, around 1m off the ground, the fruit is easy to pick, and has a long picking season. Grass walkways and lack of polytunnels help the tabletops to naturalise into their green surroundings.

As well as ever popular strawberries, visitors can also pick raspberries, blackberries, plums, blackcurrants, broad beans, spinach, Swiss chard, courgettes, French beans, onions, beetroot, squash, marrows, tomatoes and sweetcorn.

Farmer Richard expressed his delight at winning the award, "In this business, you can never rest on your laurels; there is always more to be done, improvements to be made, new ideas and crops to trial and incorporate, standards to maintain. I am delighted that the judges have recognized the hard work and passion we put into the pick-your-own, and hope that visitors will find as much to admire and enjoy when they come."