

Portadown food business wins prestigious FSA-sponsored award



(Photo: FSA in NI Deputy Director Andy Cole gives Shera McAloran from Karri Kitchen her award. Credit: Brian Morrison/NIFDA)

The FSA-sponsored Healthier Product Innovation category at the 2022 Northern Ireland Food and Drink Awards has been won by Portadown-based Karri Kitchen, owned and run by Shera McAloran.

Shera moved to Portadown from Australia in 2017 and drew directly on her heritage to cook Indonesian-inspired dishes for friends from her own kitchen. Demand soared and in 2018 she approached the experts at Southern Regional College for support to get her products shelf-ready, tweak recipes to make them healthier and apply the FSA's traffic-light nutritional labelling system.

Shera credits her Indonesian background for the emphasis on healthy dishes. "We use fresh produce and ingredients and highlight the benefits of their nutrients. It's normal for me – my

mother in Jakarta cooks very healthy food. Here in Northern Ireland, I work with local produce as much as I can. For example, I use broccoli grown in the field over the road from my house. There's no carbon footprint!"

"Winning the FSA award has been really great for us at Karri Kitchen. It gives us more confidence to know our company has support and that we are producing healthy and safe food for our customers. They are the people who buy our products, so it gives them more confidence as well."

Shera currently employs 20 people at Karri Kitchen. "The award is recognition for the entire team. Everyone involved works so hard, they are passionate about the brand and the products."

"We have progressed so much. Being recognised among all the big companies, it's really been something."

For **Food Standards Agency Deputy Director in Northern Ireland Andy Cole**, Karri Kitchen is a deserving winner: "We wanted to recognise the achievements of a Northern Ireland food business producing pre-packed products lower in calories, sugar, saturated fat and/or salt, and so we decided to sponsor the Healthier Product Innovation award at NIFDA 2022. All local food businesses registered across all sectors of the industry in Northern Ireland were able to apply."

FSA research shows consumers in Northern Ireland are getting more interested in healthy eating. 64% have told us they would be more likely to buy food reduced in sugar and at least 50% would be more likely to buy food reduced in saturated fat and salt compared to the regular version. Food businesses like Shera's have a key role to play in meeting these needs. We're delighted she has won the award."



(L to R in photo: Shera McAloran, Brenda Kelleghan (Southern Regional College), Maria Jennings (Director, FSA in NI). (Credit: Brenda Kelleghan)

Brenda Kelleghan is a Food Innovation and Technology Specialist who mentors SMEs and start-ups at Southern Regional College. She helped Shera expand her business and get her products ready for sale to the public. "She was like a breath of fresh air, producing healthy meals, all about balance. It was a fantastic concept from the start."

"The healthy aspect is Shera's whole ethos. She wanted her meals to be lower in calories and more balanced than what was currently out there on the market. We used the FSA Front-of-Pack guidelines and adjusted the recipes to make sure they fit."

"Shera did not want any red traffic-light markers on her meals, so we cooked them and then adjusted them down to amber and green. We looked at reducing the levels of salt, soy sauce and sugar. We would always refer back to the FSA guidance - it's our bible."

[Find out more about the FSA Front-of-Pack guidelines here.](#)