

Charlie Bigham's West Kitchen Wins Building of the Year in RIBA South West Awards

An 85,000 sq ft Charlie Bigham's kitchen in a regenerated Somerset quarry has been crowned Building of the Year in the region's top architectural awards – the RIBA South West Awards.



Charlie Bigham's is one of the UK's most successful independent food brands, producing 12.5 million tasty dishes every year in its distinctive wooden packs.

Two years ago, the business bought a 20-acre disused quarry at Dulcote, and commissioned fast-emerging architects Feilden Fowles to design a remarkable new home for its handmade meals.

The first phase of the Bigham's West Kitchen campus opened last year, and already employs 210 people making some of the brand's most popular dishes such as Fish Pie, Chicken Tikka and Cottage Pie.

Designed by Feilden Fowles, and built by TSL Projects, the 85,000 sq ft building wowed the regional judges of the Royal Institute of British Architecture (RIBA).



The judges commented:

"The requirements of the brief might have been met in a very simple shed; this building demonstrates the added value (at modest added cost) that client ambition and architectural ingenuity can bring to even the most prosaic brief – as a statement of intent for an employer new to the area, whose brand is bound up with quality, the building is an excellent advocate. It exemplifies architecture's purpose to surprise and delight in addition to fulfilling functional requirements."

Charlie Bigham commented:

"From the outset, we were adamant we didn't want a factory – we wanted a very big kitchen. Our food is all handmade, and everything we do is about quality, not compromise. That's carried through to the design of our new West Kitchen. We're very chuffed that the project has won such high architectural acclaim. It's a real testament to the great work of our architects Feilden Fowles and builders TSJ Projects."

Edmund Fowles, director of Feilden Fowles, commented:

"I am delighted that Charlie Bigham's ambitious new production campus has been named RIBA South West Building of the Year. The award recognises the uniqueness of this project in trying to 'humanise' the typical tin shed industrial park, reflecting Charlie's vision that to make great food requires a happy team.

"Staff wellbeing therefore drove the design, breaking down the scale, maximising connections back to the dramatic quarry landscape, bringing natural light deep into the plan from its saw tooth roof and placing great emphasis on the collective, social spaces, forming a generous rooftop terrace and cafeteria at the centre of the building.

"Any great project begins with a good client and we have enjoyed working closely with Charlie and his team to realise their vision for what a contemporary food production campus can be!"

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