

**Ham producers win gold award**

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Waitaki Bacon and Ham, owned and operated by Gus and Sue Morton, has taken out the gold award, one of the highest accolades in the 100 per cent New Zealand Ham competition.

Their Hampshire Champagne Sliced Boneless ham competed against entries from throughout New Zealand and was one of only three awarded a gold. The other two winners are from Pokeno and Kaiapoi.

The award was officially announced at a function in Oamaru yesterday which was attended by New Zealand Pork chairman Ian Carter, who presented the gold award, Waitaki Mayor Gary Kircher, and family and friends of the couple.

Mr Carter said it was a pleasure to present the Mortons with their award in their home district.

“Products from Waitaki Bacon and Ham have a local uniqueness,” he said.

“I congratulate Gus and Sue; they have a recognised brand and these awards recognise Waitaki Bacon and Ham’s efforts to supply some of the best produced hams in the country using 100 per cent New Zealand produced pork.”

The couple were also congratulated by Waitaki Mayor Gary Kircher.

Mrs Morton said she was “ecstatic” to win the award.

“It’s a first (gold) for us and we are just thrilled,” she said. “It is just outstanding to be in this position. We have lots of support from our customers and it is a pleasure to use this opportunity to celebrate our success with them.”

Retail meat industry specialist Matt Grimes, judge of the 100 per cent New Zealand Bacon and Ham competition since its inception in 2008, said the Waitaki Bacon and Ham’s entry was definitely a stand out this year.

“This was a divine sliced ham,” he said. “It had a nice even degree of moisture and a lovely aftertaste.

“The colour was also nice and even, which reflects its fresh home-made quality.”

In a true farm to fork operation, owners Mr and Mrs Morton have been raising quality pork on their Waitaki farm for the last 32 years.

Since launching their brand seven years ago, they have prided themselves in only producing fresh, top quality pork straight from the farm and ensuring their customers always have a memorable eating experience.

Guests at the function were also invited to try the award-winning Hampshire ham, which was a principal ingredient in the Waitaki ham and leek pie cooked by chef Alison Lambert.

**By Jacquie Webby**