

British accountant 'grateful' to French for top cheese award

English civil servant Matthew Feroze credits French for giving him the skills to be crowned France's most expert cheesemonger.

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The 30-year-old, who took a two-year sabbatical from his London job as a government accountant in late 2011 to pursue his passion for French culture and cheese, triumphed over 15 of the country's most talented cheese-sellers at contest in Lyon.

He is the first foreigner to win the Concours National des Fromagers at the prestigious Salon Mondiale de Restauration et Hotellerie.

To win, he had to complete several challenges including a blind tasting of cheese, cutting slices of cheese to specific weights without the aid of scales and, perhaps most importantly, he had to present a platter of cheeses he had chosen and matured himself.

Mr Feroze's colleagues at the well-known Lyon cheese shop, the Fromagerie Mons-Etinee Boiss, were delighted by his victory.

"Everyone around me has been incredibly friendly," he said.

"I have been trained in the French style. They've showed me how to do it, this isn't me bringing English knowledge.

"I came out here with nothing and it's the French industry that has really taught me how to do this, I just have enormous amounts of gratitude to them for really taking a shot on an Englishman who had passion but not very much experience."

When asked whether he would consider changing careers to become a full-time cheesemonger, Mr Feroze said had not yet made up his mind, but he was sure that cheese would always be an important part of his life.

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