

We were delighted to find out back in December that we had once again reached the finalist stage of the Irish Independent Reader Travel Awards. These awards are voted by the public, so for us are very special. The judging is conducted by a panel including highly respected members of the Irish Travel Industry, and the Irish Hospitality industry.

We do not have all the bells and whistles of larger hotels. The experience we offer at Castlewood House is very different, and relies much more on our service, and the feeling and atmosphere that we offer our guests. So all in all getting to the final five stage of the *Ireland's Favourite Small Stay* category was such an accomplishment of recognition for what we do here. To quote Pol O'Conghaile, Travel Editor of the Irish Independent, "*Castlewood House has been such a feature of our Awards since the beginning. It's a credit to you both*"

This year's event was held in the Mansion House in Dublin City centre which is a fabulous venue. We had a lovely lunch, and had lots of time to chat with our fellow finalists, and of course time to catch up with old friends, some we hadn't seen for 25 years!

We were in very esteemed company and our fellow finalists including: Hidden Valley Co. Wicklow; MacNean House Co. Cavan; Dunbrody House Co. Wexford; and Marlfield House Co. Wexford. The winner on the day was MacNean House and we were delighted for Neven and Amelda Maguire who operate this fabulous establishment.

The added bonus this year was that the Dingle Food Festival was named as Ireland's Favourite Food Experience.

There was very stiff competition in this category with the other five finalists being: The English Market Cork; The Milk Market Limerick; Eat-yard Dublin; Misunderstood Heron Co. Galway, and Chapter One in Dublin. The Festival was applauded for "*Great Food and Wine, always looking at reducing plastic and promoting green issues.*"

The Dingle Food Festival takes place on the first weekend in October every year and is one of the highlights of the year in Dingle. You can find out more information on their web site. www.dinglefood.com