

MONTREAL'S MATHIEU CLOUTIER AWARDED TITLE OF CANADA'S BEST CHEF AT THE CANADIAN CULINARY CHAMPIONSHIPS

November 30, 2009

Seven of Canada's finest chefs came together for the Gold Medal Plates Canadian Culinary Championship held in Vancouver November 27-28. Following the intense two-day competition, Montreal's Mathieu Cloutier of Kitchen Galerie emerged as the 2010 Canadian Culinary Champion. Toronto's David Lee from Nota Bene took the silver medal and Michael Carmichael of Ottawa's E18hteen took the bronze.

The competitors were the chefs who had triumphed at the Gold Medal Plates regional events across the country in the fall of 2009:

Vancouver: Rob Feenie, Cactus Club Café
Edmonton: Nathin Bye, Lazia Restaurant
Calgary: Jan Hrabec, Crazyweed Kitchen
Ottawa: Matthew Carmichael, Restaurant E18hteen
Montreal: Mathieu Cloutier & Jean-Philippe Saint-Denis, Kitchen Galerie
St. John's: Ivan [Kyutukchiev](#), Bianca's
Toronto: David Lee, Nota Bene

Mystery Wine Pairing Event

The weekend competition began with the Mystery Wine Pairing event held Friday evening at the popular Vancouver hotspot, Republic. The evening before, each chef was given a bottle of the same wine with no label and an unmarked stopper. All they knew about it was that it was Canadian and that GMP's National Wine Advisor, David Lawrason, had selected it especially for the competition.

The chefs were instructed to taste the wine and create a dish that would pair with it. Part of the challenge was ensuring their dish would feed the 250 guests attending the event on a budget of \$400. Shopping for ingredients had to be done at Granville Island and each had to present receipts for everything they purchased.

The guests were able to taste the mystery wine, later revealed as [Black Hills 2008 Alibi, an Okanagan blend of 80 percent Sauvignon Blanc with 20 percent Semillon](#). It was a delicious, crowd-pleasing and sufficiently challenging wine: [half the Semillon had seen some oak](#) and it [was a tight, perfectly-acidic, Canadian Sauvignon Blanc with surprising riches under the surface – herbal nuances, a gloss of ripe fruit hovering over the glass, plenty of citrus on the palate and a faint suggestion of spicy vanilla from the oak](#). The guests also had the opportunity to taste each of the unique dishes which had been created to pair with the wine. The attending 250 guests and 9 judges were wowed by the competing chefs being able to create such spectacular wine-themed dishes on such a limited budget! Guests voted that night for a "people's choice" favourite, an award that went to Mathieu Cloutier from Montreal.

Black Box Competition

Considered the most intense competition of the three, each chef was given an identical group of secret ingredients and given 60 minutes in which to prepare and present two separate dishes to each of the nine national judges. The chefs staggered turns at 15-minute intervals in a race against the clock.

Ingredients were quail, arctic char, fresh fennel, dragon fruit, arborio rice and Hoppelganger pale ale. Mathieu Cloutier had been slightly ahead of the pack after the Wine Pairing Challenge but the other competitors closed the gap during the Black Box competition. Going into the third and final element of the competition it was still anyone's race to win. "This was as grueling a test as it can get for these seven skilled chefs" said Head Judge James Chatto. The sold-out crowd cheered in approval as each team plated their creations on time and with much flair. Most chefs said it was the hardest challenge of their culinary career!

The Grand Finale

For this event, each chef was allowed to create any dish he or she wished, the limits set only by their own imagination and the fact that they only had Saturday afternoon to pull the masterpiece together. They could bring in whatever ingredients they wished but they had to prepare enough to serve 400 guests and each chef could only be assisted by their own two sous chefs and two student apprentices from the Pacific Institute of Culinary Arts. Wine pairing was again a component. Each chef was instructed to work with the same winery he or she had chosen to pair with during the regional events, though not restricted to the same wine.

Gold medal winning chef Mathieu Cloutier presented [a reprise of his gold medal-winning dish from the Montreal GMP gala. It starred a tiny, delicate rack of rabbit, each wee bone frenched and cleaned, the tender meat wonderfully moist and flavourful from being slowly confited in duck fat. Beside this was a quenelle of super-rich foie gras parfait and some miniature pink cubes of lightly pickled beet. What looked at first glance like a Brussels sprout turned out to be rabbit rillettes and foie gras wrapped with soft spinach leaves. A dramatic stripe of red beet caramel painted the plate while a single tooney-sized crisp of fried bread added scrunch to the dish.](#)

[The accompanying wine was the Huff Estates 2007 South Bay Chardonnay from Prince Edward County in Ontario, its rich, oaky personality a great compliment to the dish.](#)

Silver medalist Toronto's [David Lee](#) also chose to reprise the dish he used to win the Toronto GMP event staged just one week before, though he added a number of different elements to the plate. [Describing the dish to the judges, he brought over some wild ginger stems he had pickled in vinegar two years earlier and which he used to add flavour to a sour apple compote. A dab of this compote appeared on the long strip of very crispy chicken skin, served cold, that grounded his dish. On top of it was a two-inch piece of chicken breast cartilage, slow-cooked in a pressure cooker over 24 hours with ginger and coriander. Its texture was considerably softened but it still had the curious, alien soft-crunchiness of cartilage. Beside this, Chef Lee offered a couple of bites of confited chicken with creamy cauliflower purée and a silky ribbon of pancetta brought](#)

from his restaurant in Toronto, garnished with some colourful miniature flower petals and some marjoram leaves. It was a fascinating dish, beautifully paired with the off-dry 2007 June's Vineyard Riesling from 13th Street Winery in Niagara, the wine's honeyed, petrolly bouquet reaching out to the apple and ginger flavours in the dish.

As in sport when the difference between bronze and fourth is often hundredths of a second, the challenge for the CCC bronze was fractions of a percentage between Rob Feenie from Vancouver and Matthew Carmichael from Ottawa. Carmichael came out just ahead. His first element was a large mussel shell filled with a piece of rich, creamy Qualicum Bay scallop, some sea urchin and salmon roe all bathing in a foamy coconut milk. It was a fabulously marine mouthful, the many sweet sea flavours splashing about on the tongue. The second element was a small slab of black cod lacquered with honey, lemon and ginger juice. The fillet parted into glossy petals at the touch of a fork. Beside it was a comma of carrot and coconut purée. The Closson Chase South Clos 2007 Chardonnay (a most delectable wine) picked up the scallop and coconut flavours beautifully.

"It was a superb weekend for Canada's best chefs," said Stephen Leckie, president and co-founder of Gold Medal Plates. "The intensity of the chefs' three challenges made for a great weekend for the hundreds of guests who travelled from all parts of the country to witness the fierce competition. Gold Medal Plates is proud to crown Montreal's Mathieu Cloutier & his partner Jean-Philippe Saint-Denis from Kitchen Galerie, this year's champions and congratulate all seven chefs on a most impressive showing."

The judges selected for this year's Canadian Culinary Championships included:

- James Chatto, National Culinary Advisor, Toronto
- [Karl Wells, St. John's](#)
- [Robert Beauchemin, Montreal](#)
- [Anne DesBrisay, Ottawa](#)
- [Sasha Chapman, Toronto](#)
- [Clayton Folkers, Edmonton](#)
- [John Gilchrist, Calgary](#)
- [Sid Cross, Vancouver](#)
- Andrew Morrison, Vancouver (culinary referee)

About Canadian Culinary Championships

The Canadian Culinary Championships is the finale of the Gold Medal Plates 2009 project, which, since its inception in 2004, will have donated more than \$3.5 million to support Canadian Olympic and Paralympic athletes. Gold Medal Plates and the Canadian Culinary Championships have elevated the profile of Canadian cuisine and wine. The Canadian Culinary Championships is proudly sponsored by EPCOR.

For more information about the competition or to download photos visit www.goldmedalplates.com

About the Canadian Olympic Committee

The Canadian Olympic Committee (COC) is a national, private, not-for-profit organization committed to sport excellence. It is responsible for all aspects of Canada's involvement in the Olympic Movement, including Canada's participation in the Olympic and Pan American Games and a wide variety of programs that promote the Olympic Movement in Canada through cultural and educational means. For news and information, visit the COC website at www.olympic.ca and find the team on both Facebook (Canadian Olympic Team) and Twitter (CDNOlympicTeam).

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