



GOLD MEDAL PLATES OTTAWA 2016 Media Report

1. Media in Attendance

Broadcast

- CTV Ottawa – did live hit with Rosie MacLennan during 6pm news hour (largest audience of the day);
- Radio-Canada – did live hit with Erica Wiebe and Mikaël Kingsbury during 6pm news hour (largest audience of the day);
- Rogers Television – interviewed all Chefs, Head Judge James Chatto and 2015 winner Marc Lepine, for a special being produced on our event (we will ask for copy).
- CBC News – remote coverage – web story

Print

- Peter Hum, Ottawa Citizen Food Editor (with photographer)
- Pierre Jury, Le Droit Food Critic (with photographer)
- Rachel Aiello, Hill Times (with photographer)
- Laura Roy, Ottawa At Home Magazine
- Anne Desbrisay, for Ottawa Magazine

Ottawa GMP Photographer – Greg Kolz

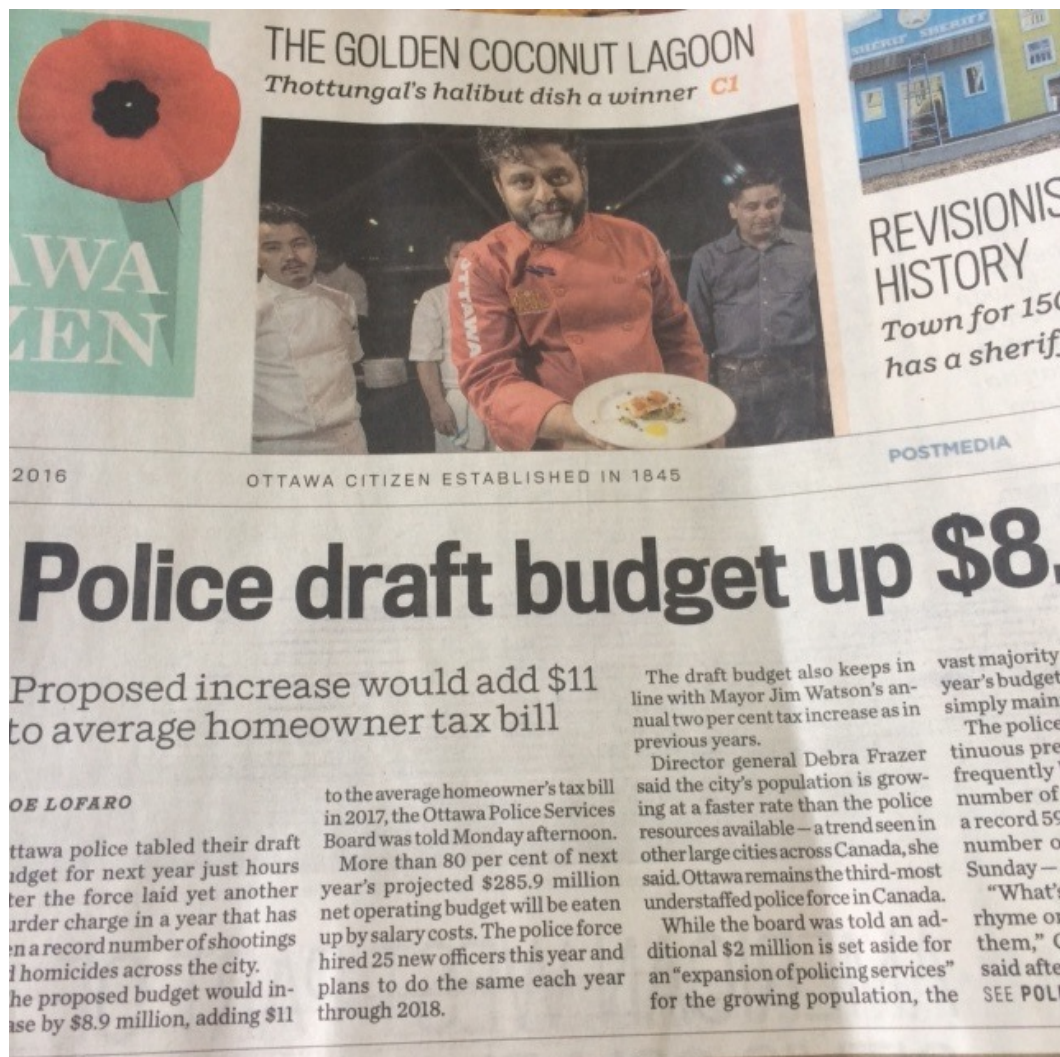
See next page for a selection of print pieces covering the event. Note that some have not yet been published yet, but this content gives you a good idea of the coverage.

2. A selection: Print Coverage of the event

(note that some are currently not available, due to publication later on – e.g. magazines)



FRONT PAGE



Chef Joe Thottungal wins Ottawa's 2016 Gold Medal Plates competition



PETER HUM, OTTAWA CITIZEN

[More from Peter Hum, Ottawa Citizen](#)

Published on: November 8, 2016 | Last Updated: November 8, 2016 1:49 PM EST



Joe Thottungal of Coconut Lagoon prepares plates of Poached Halibut as ten Ottawa area chefs compete in the annual Gold Medal Plates competition and fund raiser for the Canadian Olympic

Organization. WAYNE CUDDINGTON / POSTMEDIA

Joe Thottungal, the chef and owner of Coconut Lagoon, a well-established Indian restaurant on St. Laurent Boulevard, took home the gold Monday night at Ottawa's Gold Medal Plates competition.

Competing for the second time in the contest, which is the centrepiece of a fundraiser for Canada's Olympians, Thottungal took home the gold for his dish, which featured halibut poached in spiced oil, with fish curry crumbs, woodland mushroom aviyal and a lentil emulsion.

Thottungal, who opened Coconut Lagoon a dozen years ago, finished ahead of nine other chefs, including two winners of the competition in previous years and a selection of young chefs at some of the Ottawa area's most celebrated restaurants.



The entries at Ottawa's 2016 Gold Medal Plates competition, ranked



PETER HUM, OTTAWA CITIZEN

[More from Peter Hum, Ottawa Citizen](#)

Published on: November 8, 2016 | Last Updated: November 8, 2016 2:47 PM EST



Kevin Benes of Carben Food + Drink prepares plates Cured Black Cod as ten Ottawa area chefs compete in the annual Gold Medal Plates competition and fund raiser for the Canadian Olympic Organization.

Wayne Cuddington/ Postmedia WAYNE CUDDINGTON / POSTMEDIA

Roughly half an hour or so remains until the results of this year's Gold Medal Plates competition in Ottawa are announced. As I've done for the last two years, I'll venture my own rankings in advance

of the big reveal, and see how they compare to the those of the judge's panel.

This solitary, unofficial judge found the ranking trickier than ever. Nearly every dish served at the Shaw Centre, as part of a fundraising effort in support of Canada's Olympians, bombarded guests with a well-crafted composition of ingredients, tastes and colours.

When all was eaten, I had three categories — good, better and best — and in each were several entries, and it was easy for me to swap within each category. Tomorrow, having slept on things, I might well revise the list below if you were to ask me.

Regardless, here's my snap, from-least-favourite-to-most-favourite ranking of the night's 10 dishes bearing in mind a range of criteria — taste, of course, but also originality, harmony (the interplay of ingredients), difficulty and appearance.

10. Joe Thottungal – Coconut Lagoon

Halibut poached in Keralan-spice-infused oil, fish curry crumbs, woodland mushroom aviyal and lentil emulsion.



Joe Thottungal of Coconut Lagoon prepares plates of Poached Halibut as ten Ottawa area chefs compete in the annual Gold Medal Plates competition and fund raiser for the Canadian Olympic

Organization. WAYNE CUDDINGTON / POSTMEDIA

As he did at last year's Gold Medal Plates, when his dish took home the bronze, chef Thottungal cooked in keeping with his Keralan roots and palate. His dish won lots of points for flavour, but my piece of fish was woefully dry and the plating was much more casual than the stylized dish shown above. (To be fair to Thottungal and his food, I did eat his dish at the end of the night.)

9. Michael Blackie – NeXT

Braised oxtail and flowery blewit mushroom crisp dumpling, avocado, roast plum, purple viking potato “crash,” verjus “redux tingle”



Michael Blackie of NeXT prepared a plate of Braised Oxtail with Crispy Dumpling as ten Ottawa area chefs compete in the annual Gold Medal Plates competition and fund raiser for the Canadian Olympic Organization. WAYNE CUDDINGTON / POSTMEDIA

The Stittsville-based chef with a fondness for creative, if slightly befuddling, verbiage had little to prove at Gold Medal Plates on Monday. He won the whole shooting match a decade ago and even came in second at the Canadian Culinary Championships months later. However, I was let down by his braised oxtail and mushroom dumpling on a bed of avocado, roasted plum and potato. The dish needed a bigger punch from its oxtail and it felt somewhat muddled and heavy to me. The bed of avocado and potato did not wow me.

8. Kevin Benes – Carben Food + Drink

Cured black cod, bacon and apple



Kevin Benes of Carben Food + Drink prepares plates the Cured Black Cod as ten Ottawa area chefs compete in the annual Gold Medal Plates competition and fund raiser for the Canadian Olympic Organization. WAYNE CUDDINGTON / POSTMEDIA

The Hintonburg chef's dish had some nice components to it, as well as some modernist flourishes with its clean-flavoured gels and emulsions. However, it might have been overly deconstructed, and the dish's centrepiece, a sushi-like round of cured black cod, did not need to be so salty.

7. Marc Doiron – Town

Forbidden risotto with salsa romesco, spicy shrimp, chorizo sausage, Sambuca fennel and sea urchin



Marc Doiron of town prepares this plate of Forbidden Risotto as ten Ottawa area chefs compete in the annual Gold Medal Plates competition and fund raiser for the Canadian Olympic Organization. WAYNE CUDDINGTON / POSTMEDIA

The Elgin Street chef offered an interesting multicultural spin on things by cooking Asian black forbidden rice risotto-style and then studding it with chorizo and spicy morsels of shrimp, which made me think of paella. Fennel slaw pickled with sambuca and a mousse of sea urchin were nice pick-me-ups. Give Doiron marks for standing out from the crowd with a grain-based dish. But in the end, I just didn't feel compelled to eat the whole serving.

6. Daniella Manrique – The Soca Kitchen

Pig-ear-crusted tuna over mole negro topped with a sous vide, smoked sepia finished with a coconut and foie gras espuma garnished with red sorrel leaf and black lava



Daniela Manrique of The Soca Kitchen plate of Pig Ear Crusted Tuna as ten Ottawa area chefs compete in the annual Gold Medal Plates competition and fund raiser for the Canadian Olympic

Organization. WAYNE CUDDINGTON / POSTMEDIA

At her first Gold Medal Plates appearance, the young Venezuela-born chef loaded her bowl with a lot of distinctive ingredients drawing upon Latin America's bounty. At its core was a dense chunk of tuna, crusted in crumbled fried pig's ear. Beneath it was a complex mole negro sauce, and on top of it was cuttlefish, smoked and cooked sous vide, plus a foam that relied on coconut and foie gras. Around the bowl's interior was a salty black slick. For me, everything in this dish needed to be eaten together for the best effect. The tuna on its own didn't persuade me, but in concert with the other components it was much more effective.

5. Adam Vettorel — North & Navy

Trout in bubbles



Adam Vettorel of North and Navy prepares bowls of Trout in Bubbles as ten Ottawa area chefs compete in the annual Gold Medal Plates competition and fund raiser for the Canadian Olympic

Organization. WAYNE CUDDINGTON / POSTMEDIA

The chef from the celebrated Italian restaurant in Centretown created a sophisticated dish with some subtlety to it — mild trout was at its core, and a finishing splash of sparkling wine (ie., bubbles) was meant to act as a vinaigrette and activate other flavours and ingredients such as fennel pollen. Meanwhile, a crisp cracker atop the fish, which in turn was topped with caviar, delivered obvious crunchy and salty appeal.

4. Jon Svazas – Fauna

Lamb, fermented Santa Rosa plum, black trumpet and black garlic puree, Brussel sprouts, potato, rose petals, white truffle



Jon Svazas of fauna plate as ten Ottawa area chefs compete in the annual Gold Medal Plates competition and fund raiser for the Canadian Olympic Organization. WAYNE CUDDINGTON / POSTMEDIA

The Centretown chef finished second at last year's Gold Medal Plates and his dish this year was another strong, easy-to-like contender, with a perfect cube of lamb, the intrigue and umami of a black trumpet and black garlic purée, some fermented plum, and a final shaving of white truffle for luxury.

3. Mike Houle –The Village House

Slow-roasted pork belly, salt pickerel corn ravioli, smoked fish and mushroom broth, gremolata, tomato pearls



Mike Houle of The Village House prepares plates Pork Belly and Salt Pickeral as ten Ottawa area chefs compete in the annual Gold Medal Plates competition and fund raiser for the Canadian Olympic

Organization. WAYNE CUDDINGTON / POSTMEDIA

There was much to like about the Wakefield chef's bowl, which reflected the homey charm of his restaurant. The dish's base, a broth of smoked fish and mushroom, was clear and lovely. Pork belly, shredded, rather than in a slab or chunk, added heft. Sautéed Brussel sprouts added earthiness while a gremolata and tiny, quasi-ketchupy pearls gave the dish brightness. Compositionally, the dish did remind me a bit of last year's winner from Atelier's Marc Lepine,

2. Rich Wilson – The Pomeroy House

Duck magret, King Eryngii, gyoza, miso, winter squash



Richard Wilson of The Pomeroy House prepared Magret of Duck as ten Ottawa area chefs compete in the annual Gold Medal Plates competition and fund raiser for the Canadian Olympic Organization. WAYNE

CUDDINGTON / POSTMEDIA

The young chef's dish displayed the same lucidness and clean technique of the food at his Glebe restaurant. Slices of duck breast – the competition's only poultry, interestingly enough – were perfectly cooked and seasoned, and the mushroom dumpling was well-made. Miso and a squash puree added rounded, comforting flavours. Wilson's dish was arguably more simple on its face than some of its rivals, but it also had a bit of a spicy surprise factor to it, and its aftertaste was very pleasant.

1. Jamie Stunt – Soif bar á vin

Bison, crab and oyster with basil and quince.



Jamie Stunt of Soif bar á vin prepared plates of Bison, crab and oyster with basil and quince, as ten Ottawa area chefs compete in the annual Gold Medal Plates competition and fund raiser for the Canadian Olympic Organization. WAYNE CUDDINGTON / POSTMEDIA

I might have tweaked the description of Stunt's dish just a bit, because for me, various big-flavoured iterations of crab deserved top billing. Slabs of bison carpaccio provided a striking fleshy contrast, and bits of deep-fried oyster added briny crunch. Quince and basil added worthwhile secondary notes. Reading this description, the dish seems almost a little improbable to me, and perhaps it looked a little unkempt. But it was definitely delicious and surprising. It's the dish that I most wanted to eat again, immediately, and so it comes on tops in my book.



Previous medalists, talented newcomers among 2016's Gold Medal Plates chefs



PETER HUM, OTTAWA CITIZEN
[More from Peter Hum, Ottawa Citizen](#)

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Soca Kitchen and Pub chef Daniela Manrique will compete at Gold Medal Plates Ottawa in November, 2016. WAYNE CUDDINGTON / OTTAWA CITIZEN

This year's field of chefs competing at Gold Medal Plates Ottawa will include four previous Ottawa medalists and five newcomers to the annual competition that raises funds for Canada's Olympic athletes.

The participants for the Nov. 7 event, announced Monday morning, include:

Kevin Benes Carben



Pastry chef/co-owner Caroline Ngo, Kai Benes and chef/owner Keven Benes of Carben Food + Drink in

Hintonburg JEAN LEVAC / OTTAWA CITIZEN

Michael Blackie NeXT (Gold 2006)

Marc Doiron town

Mike Houle The Village House



Mike Houle and Sarah Swan are co-owners of The Village House in Wakefield PAT MCGRATH / THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

Daniela Manrique The Soca Kitchen
Jamie Stunt Soif! (Gold 2012)
Jon Svazas fauna (Silver 2015)
Joe Thottungal Coconut Lagoon (Bronze 2015)
Adam Vettorel North & Navy



Chef Adam Vettorel of North & Navy will compete at the 2016 Gold Medal Plates event in Ottawa. WAYNE CUDDINGTON / OTTAWA CITIZEN
Richard Wilson The Pomeroy House



The Pomeroy House's chef and co-owner Richard Wilson JEAN LEVAC / OTTAWA CITIZEN
This lineup strikes me as an astutely chosen mix. I've had splendid dishes from all of these chefs over the years, and my two favourite new restaurants last year were Carben and the Pomeroy House. Their respective chefs, Benes and Wilson, along with Vettorel

from North & Navy, Manrique of the Soca Kitchen and Houle of the Village House in Wakefield are first-time competitors at Gold Medal Plates.

Last year's competition in Ottawa was won by Marc Lepine of Ottawa, who went on to win the Canadian Culinary Championships last February in Kelowna, B.C., as he had four years earlier. The two-time national winner will be one of the judges at the Shaw Centre on Nov. 7.

Gold Medal Plates competitions took place in 11 Canadian cities last year, and since 2004, the event has raised close to \$11 million for Canadian Olympians.



Chef Joe Thottungal wins Ottawa's 2016 Gold Medal Plates

Chef Joe Thottungal wins Ottawa's 2016 Gold Medal Plates competition

BY [PETER HUM](#)

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Joe Thottungal of Coconut Lagoon prepares plates of Poached Halibut as ten Ottawa area chefs compete in the annual Gold Medal Plates competition and fund raiser for the Canadian Olympic Organization. Wayne Cuddington/Postmedia WAYNE CUDDINGTON / POSTMEDIA

Article

<http://www.ottawasun.com/2016/11/07/chef-joe-thottungal-wins-ottawas-2016-gold-medal-plates-competition>Share

Joe Thottungal, the chef and owner of Coconut Lagoon, a well-established Indian restaurant on St. Laurent Boulevard, took home the gold Monday night at Ottawa's Gold Medal Plates competition.

Competing for the second time in the contest, which is the centrepiece of a fundraiser for Canada's Olympians, Thottungal took home the gold for his dish, which featured halibut poached in spiced oil, with fish curry crumbs, woodland mushroom aviyal and a lentil emulsion.

Thottungal, who opened Coconut Lagoon a dozen years ago, finished ahead of nine other chefs, including two winners of the competition in previous years and a selection of young chefs at some of the Ottawa area's most celebrated restaurants.

Coming in second this year was Jamie Stunt, a previous winner of the competition, and the chef at Soif bar á vin in Gatineau's Hull sector. His dish paired various crab preparations, bison carpaccio and deep-fried oysters.

Taking the bronze was chef Marc Doiron of Town on Elgin Street for an intriguing dish that starred black rice in a risotto, studded with spicy shrimp and chorizo sausage.

Speaking for the judge's panel, head judge James Chatto said that the top five entries "were all within five per cent of each other" and that there was no unanimity among the judges.

"We had to analyze the marks really closely to see who would make the podium," Chatto said. "The winning dish was full of flavour; everything was in harmony."

Chatto's fellow judges included Capital Dining author Anne DesBrisay, House of Commons executive chef Judson Simpson, cookbook authors and local food personalities Margaret Dickenson and Pam Collacott, Sheila Whyte, the owner of Thyme and Again Creative Catering, and chef Marc Lepine of Atelier, who won Ottawa's Gold Medal Plates last year and followed up by winning the Canadian Culinary Championship in February.

Last year, Thottungal, whose casual restaurant serves the vibrantly spiced food of Kerala, a state in South India, came in third with a roasted lamb loin dish.

Next February, he and his halibut dish will represent the Ottawa area at the Canadian Culinary Championships in Kelowna.

Coconut Lagoon chef wins Gold Medal Plates competition

Joe Thottungal won with a halibut poached in spiced oil with fish curry crumbs

[CBC News](#) Posted: Nov 08, 2016 6:16 PM ET Last Updated: Nov 08, 2016 6:16 PM ET



Coconut Lagoon owner and chef Joe Thottungal prepares one of the dishes in Monday evening's competition. (Greg Kolz/Gold Medal Plates Ottawa)

Coconut Lagoon chef and owner Joe Thottungal said he was "thrilled" to win Ottawa's Gold Medal Plates competition Monday night and earn a place at the Canadian Culinary Championships. And despite a late night, he still went to work the next day to serve the lunchtime crowd.

The unassuming Thottungal won over eight judges with a halibut poached in spiced oil with fish curry crumbs, woodland mushroom aviyal and a lentil emulsion.

"Just thrilled, excited, and my staff was overjoyed," said Thottungal to Alan Neal on *All in a Day*. "I went home yesterday at around 11, 11:30 [at night] and then woke up today... then I came to work."

"Tomorrow I take off, for sure," he said.

Thottungal's St. Laurent Boulevard restaurant serves food true to his roots, from the south Indian state of Kerala.



Joe Thottungal served sample size plates of halibut poached in spiced oil, with fish curry crumbs, woodland mushroom aviyal and lentil emulsion to win Ottawa's Gold Medal Plates competition. (Greg Kolz/Gold Medal Plates Ottawa)

But for the competition — which requires the chef to serve about 600 people — he added a few Canadian touches to his meal, choosing halibut for the fish and making the traditional aviyal vegetable dish with six kinds of in-season local mushrooms.

'Without the taste there is no point'

He said it took a month to settle on the meal to create.

"It has to be colourful, because people see with their eyes first before they taste it. Then we have to focus on the taste, because without the taste there is no point," he said.

The most difficult task, he said, was making the curry crumbs, which he did after much experimentation by dehydrating a traditional Indian curry in the oven for 12 hours.

"It was a little bit hard but finally it turned out very well," he said.

Jamie Stunt, a previous winner and a chef at Soif Bar a Vin in Gatineau, finished second, and Mark Doiron, a chef at Town on Elgin Street, placed third.

Thottungal will represent the Ottawa area at the Canadian Culinary Championships next February in Kelowna, B.C.

Anne DesBrisay's Capital Dining

Gold Medal Plates 2016



Photo courtesy Gold Medal Plates

The eleventh Ottawa-Gatineau Gold Medal Plates was a grand night of feasting and partying in support of our Canadian Olympic athletes. It was also, of course, a cooking competition, one that brings together ten of the National Capital Region's finest chefs.

We ate incredibly well this year, the dishes as inventive, well executed and delicious as I can remember. It was also a fierce competition, at least in the judges' room, with the top five chefs within a whisker of each other. Our deliberations took longer than they did in past years, and felt louder than usual!

At the end of the night, the podium was occupied with chefs Marc Doiron from Town, Jamie Stunt from Soif, and Joe Thottungal of the Coconut Lagoon, taking the bronze, silver and gold medals, in that order.

Seven of the ten competing chefs chose to work with fish. The one that swam to the top of the heap came from the little Kerala restaurant on St Laurent Boulevard, currently wrapped in construction paper. The ten-year-old Coconut Lagoon is in the midst of growing its small space. And after last night's win, I would suggest more tables are a solidly good idea.



Photo credit GMP

Chef Joe Thottungal won the bronze at last year's competition. This year he reached the top of the podium with a dish that began with Pacific halibut soaked overnight in seasoned green mango juice. He then slow-poached the fish in canola oil infused with garlic, shallots and a profusion of Kerala spices – green cardamom, cloves, cinnamon, star anise, fennel seed and white peppercorns. It arrived topped with what Thottungal described as “Kerala curry crumbs,” a mix that included ginger, curry leaves and smoky black tamarind, splashed with coconut milk, then dehydrated such that the sauce became a super-charged red brittle, lending flavour, crunch and smoke to the moist, fragrant fish. To the side of the halibut was a mushroom aviyal (an aviyal is a vegetable side dish seasoned with curry leaves and fresh coconut, famously served at the Onam Sadya feast) with six sorts of mushrooms, speckled with curry leaves. The orange dots on the plate were a red lentil-ghee emulsion cooked with mustard seed and asafoetida, the

green a spinach and coriander hariyali masala. Thottungal finished the dish with garnet coloured ‘caviar’ pearls of beet juice spiked with ginger. Paired with the winning plate was the 2015 off dry Riesling from Huff Estates, which the judges found a superb match, the sweetness and tang, the mango and mineral notes, greeting the dish in a loving way, and completely refreshing the mouth.



Photo credit GMP

Taking the silver medal at this year’s culinary competition was the winner of the 2013 Ottawa-Gatineau GMP, and silver medallist at the 2014 Canadian Culinary Championships. Chef Jamie Stunt, formerly of Oz Kafé, and now at Véronique Rivest’s Soif bar a vin. As is the way of things at Soif, the dish was built around the wine – a Gaspereau Valley, Nova Scotia 2009 Méthode Classique brut from Benjamin Bridge. (And, as it happened, it was also the wine awarded ‘Best in Show’ by the GMP wine judges, led by David Lawrason.) “We really like raw, briny things with sparklers,” Stunt explained to our judges’ table. He had looked further east of the Gaspereau Valley, to source the Fogo Island crab that was the star of his plate, mining its richness in four distinct ways, and pairing the crab with bison, presented as a carpaccio rimmed with bison jerky powder. It was an odd marriage, but one that worked incredibly well. Stunt had pickled quince and fashioned a quince vinaigrette, delivered a bit of crunch with a fried oyster and with bread toasted in crab butter, a hit of spiciness with lightly pickled radish, a richness with a crab aioli

I'd like to eat a spoonful of every day for the rest of my life, and finished the pretty plate with salty pops of brilliant orange trout roe.



Our bronze medal went to chef Marc Doiron of Town restaurant for his 'Forbidden Risotto'. Using Chinese black rice (called 'forbidden' or sometimes 'emperor' rice), Doiron had made a risotto of sorts, with powerful paella flavours. Embedded in the purplish-black puck of rice were chunks of spicy chorizo, juicy shrimp, and crackling bits of socorrat (a fancy word for toasty, crusted rice), the whole flavoured with gochujang, the essential fermented condiment of Korean cuisine and set over a romesco sauce. A salad topper featuring ribbons of fennel compressed in Sambucca, lemon juice and dill fronds, was a delightful energizer to the earthy-flavoured rice, as were the green dots on the plate – a gelée of chives, basil and cilantro. Anchoring a fennel tuile – a thin, brittle cracker in the shape of a ring – to the plate was a mousse of sea urchin. A wee garden of edible flowers prettied it all up. For the wine, Doiron turned to the 2014 Pinot Gris Cuivré from Stanners Vineyard in Prince Edward County, the only straw bale constructed winery east of the Rockies, and a good match to the dish!

And so it's on to Kelowna for chef Joe Thottungal, to compete at the Canadian Culinary Championships next February. The Gold Medal Plates pan-national gastronomic campaign continues through next week, with Winnipeg and Victoria the only two remaining cities.



My thanks to my fellow culinary judges: to 'Hill Chef' Judson Simpson, executive chef of the House of Commons, chair of the Canadian Culinary Federation and international culinary judge; to columnist, television host and award-winning cookbook author Margaret Dickenson; to culinary instructor, food stylist, writer and seasoned TV cook Pam Collacott; to the president and owner of Thyme & Again Creative Catering and Take Home Foods, Sheila Whyte; to last year's Gold Medal Plates winner (and two time Canadian Culinary Champion) chef Marc Lepine of Atelier; and to Gold Medal Plates culinary advisor, the Toronto writer and editor, James Chatto.

If you'd care to read about Thottungal's competition, Canadian chefs from St John's to Victoria, check out Chatto's reports on each city's champion. Thus far, as it happens, four of them are women.