Flavor, Culture, Healthfulness

19th Annual Tastes of the World Culinary Conference at UMass

Hundreds of collegiate chefs from the U.S. and Canada gathered at the 18th Annual Tastes of the World Chef Culinary Conference at the University of Massachusetts (UMass) – Amherst from June 16-21 to learn from culinary experts on “Flavor, Culture, Healthfulness: The Future of College Dining Menus,” the conference’s theme.

“The 19th Annual Tastes of the World Chef Culinary Conference was the most attended (259) and the most exciting one yet,” said Ken Toong, conference chair and executive director of Auxiliary Enterprises at UMass. “It was an intense but fun week. We had celebrity chefs, powerful presentations, panel discussion, industry showcase, 18 hands-on workshops and competitions. We discussed the literacy of food and the social responsibility, tested hundreds of recipes and tasted many cuisines. There is so much we can do, as operators and chefs, to continue to provide food that tastes good, and is good for you, while supporting sustainability.”

The event featured several knowledgeable speakers, an
American Culinary Federation (ACF)-sanctioned culinary competition and hands-on sessions with small group production workshops.

A popular addition to the conference this year was a Chopped competition, based on the popular Food Network show. Like the program, randomly selected chef attendees were given a mystery basket of ingredients and had 30 minutes to prepare an entrée. The UMass "Chopped Champion" was Nathan Barratt, chef of Food Services at Victoria University in the University of Toronto in Canada. (Barratt is profiled in this month's Compliments to the Chef on p. 16.)

In his presentation, "Chef's Choice: Putting Health, Sustainability and Flavor on the Menu," Arlin Wasserman, founder of Changing Tastes, a consultancy working to help food and agriculture companies in the areas of sustainability, public health and demographics, spoke of how more and more people are eating more, and thereby asking culinary professionals to make

**Culinary Competition Results**

**GOLD**

**Team F**
- Matthias Accurso - University of Massachusetts
- Anthony Jung - University of Massachusetts
- Pam Adams - University of Massachusetts
- Jeff Kellogg - University of Massachusetts

**BRONZE**

**Team A**
- Patrick Cavanaugh - University of Michigan
- Frank Turchan - University of Michigan
- John Merucci - University of Michigan
- Paul Smith - University of Michigan

**SILVER**

**Team B**
- Robert Albright - Skidmore College
- Frank Esposito - Skidmore College
- Robb Meisner - Skidmore College
- Paul Karlson - Skidmore College

**Team C**
- David Bevan - University of Richmond
- Wendy Boberek - University of Richmond
- Michael Larue - University of Richmond
- Ashley Blount - University of Richmond

**Team D**
- Heidi Brousseau - Phillips Exeter Academy
- Christine Kendall - Phillips Exeter Academy
- Daniel Ferrand - Phillips Exeter Academy
- Jack Park - Phillips Exeter Academy

**Team E**
- Megan Bugg - University of Illinois
- Josh Cox - University of Illinois
- Christopher Symanski - University of Illinois
- SooHwa Yu - University of Illinois

**Team H**
- Gordon Cooleage - University of Guelph
- Andrew Falkingham - University of Guelph
- Russell Weir - Algonquin College
- Mokshu Mohammed - University of Saskatchewan

**Team I**
- Daniel Czebniak - Cornell University
- Matthew McLaren - Cornell University
- Brian Ross - Cornell University
- Anthony Kveragas - Cornell University

**Team J**
- Jeffrey Hendrix - University of New Hampshire
- Brian Place - University of New Hampshire
- Christopher Kaschak - University of New Hampshire
- Todd Sweet - University of New Hampshire

**Team K**
- Steve Golob - University of British Columbia
- Joshua McWilliams - University of British Columbia
- Tony Grewal - University of British Columbia
- Duke Mochi - University of British Columbia

**Team L**
- Kelly Haggerty - University of Connecticut
- Jennifer Lyder - University of Connecticut
- Charlie String - University of Connecticut
- Scott Chapman - University of Connecticut

**Team M**
- Jessica Ingraham - Penn State University
- Zach Lober - Penn State University
- Shannon Lose - Penn State University
- Sarah Kops - Michigan State University

**Team N**
- Terry Jennings - Northern Michigan University
- Nathan Mileski - Northern Michigan University
- Mike Sprague - Northern Michigan University
- Laurie Schneider - Northern Michigan University

**Team O**
- Kelley Riggleman - Penn State University
- Luke Platt - Lynchburg College
- Taylor Whitmore - University of Massachusetts
- Kenneth Taitt - University of Massachusetts

**Team P**
- Roger Garland - Ohio State University
- Joel Link - ACF - Ohio Union
- Jeff Arthur - Ohio State University
- Marcus Ancell - University of Northern Iowa
their food choices for them. “Today over 60 cents out of every food dollar is spent on food where a culinary professional has selected all the ingredients,” he said. “We are also raising the bar by expanding our tastes to appreciate and expect flavors from every culture and corner of the planet. We’re now getting paid more than ever to be experts, be creative and make choices, not just cook food.”

A panel discussion featuring Dawn Aubrey, dining director at the University of Illinois; Gail T. Finan, director of Cornell Dining at Cornell University; Paul Melchior, director of Dining at San Diego State University; and Bill McNeace, executive director of Dining at the University of North Texas, and moderated by Gregg Wallis, managing editor of On-Campus Hospitality, touched upon a number of issues in regard to healthy eating, local sourcing and food cost. The presentation is available online at www.oncampushospitality.com.

Chef Robert Irvine, star of Food Network’s Restaurant: Impossible, among other shows, was on hand to offer his unique take on food and the foodservice industry. He also led a hands-on production workshop.

As is always the case, those hands-on production workshops were a popular part of the conference. Chef Deborah Madison, in her workshop “Plant Food Recipes,” focused on vegetarian dishes.

Participants learned a range of dishes from Real Hummus to Smoky Kale and Potato Cakes, a composed soup, a Quinoa Salad with Avocados and Pistachios and more dishes.

“These are recipes that hold up well under foodservice conditions, are appealing to the tastes of younger people and are designed to feature ingredients that might be grown at the school, such as fresh tarragon,” she said. “And some, like the hummus, can include fine olive oil as a garnish, as well as bring a commonly purchased food to a higher and more visually appealing standard.”

In “Thai Street Food Made Simple,” Chef Chai Siriyarn worked with participants to make some of the most popular Thai food’s including Pad Se-Ew noodles, Pad Thai noodles (with glass noodles), Pork Belly Panang Curry, Thai Samosas, Mango with Sticky Rice, Thai Mung Bean Cake and Thai Spicy Chicken Stir-Fry.

Chef Ross Kamens, in “Health, Flavor and Gluten Free. It’s all about balance!” instructed participants on a “flavorful journey creating simple and healthy sauces, marinades, vinaigrettes and several flavorful condiments infusing unique and explosive flavors.” Attendees learned about the benefits of a few select healthy ingredients and superfoods and created unique and craveable gluten-free dishes.

The conference concluded with 17 teams of four competing in an ACF-sanctioned culinary competition. Each team was given a mystery basket of products with which they were given three hours to prepare a four-course soup/appetizer/salad/entree menu. The teams were required to plate four of each course, with 12 servings for the fourth course. [See sidebar for winners]

Preparations are already underway for next year’s conference. “Next year, we will be celebrating our 20th anniversary, and I promise it will be the best one yet,” said Toong.