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Sent: Friday, March 09, 2012 9:31 AM
To: Fenster, Dru J (CED)
Subject: PR 12-09 Alaska Chefs Compete in New York
Attachments: 12-9 Experience Alaska FINAL.pdf



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 9, 2012

No. 12-09

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Alaska Chefs Compete in New York

(New York, NY) – Three Alaskan chefs, stocked with Alaska seafood and Alaska Grown ingredients, entered into a friendly competition yesterday in New York City — all in the name of promoting Alaska.

In an event hosted by the State of Alaska's Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development (DCCED) to promote tourism, wild Alaska seafood and Alaska Grown marketing initiatives, a "Top Chef"-style cooking competition was held at Bar Basque restaurant and was judged by some of the biggest culinary names in the country.

Alaskan chefs included Chef Kirsten Dixon, representing Holland America Line; Chef Patrick Hoogerhyde, on behalf of the Alaska Railroad; and, Chef Erik Slater, representing CIRI Alaska Tourism. The three whipped up tasty dishes using wild Alaska seafood and a selection of Alaska Grown ingredients. Alaska snow crab, king salmon and cod were provided by the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute. Alaska ingredients included potatoes from VanderWeele Farms, birch syrup

tapped from birch forests tended by Kahiltna Birchworks, strawberry-gooseberry jam made from wild Alaska berries, lemon basil-infused vinegar and lemon seafood seasoning from Basically Basil and Alaskan Amber beer from the Alaskan Brewing Company.

"The cooking competition was a way to introduce people to talented Alaska chefs and, of course, Alaskan ingredients," said DCCED Commissioner Susan Bell. "Alaska cuisine is all about eating local, wild and natural. Travelers can learn a lot about a destination through its food."

Dixon's recipe was an Alaska springtime crab roll featuring potatoes and lemon basil vinegar with a dollop of rhubarb cherry chutney. Hoogerhyde's dish included king salmon glazed with Alaska birch-sage molasses over roasted butternut squash risotto, sprinkled with lemon seafood seasoning. Slater chose Alaskan Amber to batter his cod and included strawberry-gooseberry jam in the chipotle crema and dressing for his cabin fever tacos.

The chefs' creations were judged by notable chefs and a culinary editor: Hugh Acheson, chef and partner at the 5&10 restaurant in Athens, Ga., and a recent judge on "Top Chef: Texas;" Todd Coleman, executive food editor at Saveur magazine; and, Sam Talbot, a "Top Chef" semi-finalist and executive chef of the Surf Lodge in Montauk, New York.

"There are a great number of Alaska Grown products offered by our farmers that when used create uniquely Alaskan flavor profiles," said Amy Pettit, development specialist with the Alaska Division of Agriculture. "It was fun to have our farm products be a part of this event."

The tougher critics arrived later in the evening for a reception hosted by the state that showcased Alaska to New York-based travel and food media. Journalists representing media outlets, including Condé Nast Traveler and Travel + Leisure magazines, the Huffington Post, the New York Times and "CBS This Morning." The media sampled the dishes and Alaska tourism-industry businesses pitched reporters on Alaska editorial opportunities ranging from agri-tourism to visiting all parts of the state.

So how did the Alaska chefs do in the cooking competition? Chef Hoogerhyde received the Best Use of Alaska Ingredients award. Most Innovative Dish went to Chef Slater. Chef Dixon won the award for Best Technique.

"Each of the chefs really showed off our wild Alaska seafood to its fullest potential," said Tyson Fick, communications director for the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute. "It was a pleasure to hear rave reviews of each dish."

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