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Thursday, January 21, 2010

Area chefs preparing to square off



Chefs pictured recently at the Harlequin Restaurant in the Beechwood Hotel are, front row: Ian Hickey, 55 Pearl Restaurant, left, and William Nemeroff, Cedar Street Restaurant, and, back row, Michael Giletto and Alina Eisenhauer of Sweet. (T&G Staff/PAUL KAPTEYN)

By Barbara M. Houle SPECIAL TO THE TELEGRAM & GAZETTE
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Local chefs compete Jan. 31 in Union Station in Worcester for the highly coveted title of Worcester's Best Chef.

The event, from 4 to 8 p.m., will have Billy Costa of KISS 108 Boston and NECN's TV Diner as master of ceremonies. The judging panel will include executive chef Michael Giletto, who has appeared on TV food shows, such as "Chopped," "Iron Chef America" and "Ultimate Recipe Showdown."

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Tickets: \$50 per person; \$35, student with ID; \$80, couple; \$400, corporate table. Online ticket sales are recommended; tickets will be sold at the door, if available. There will be valet parking.

Visit www.worcestersbestchef.com for more information.

Proceeds will benefit the college scholarship program for culinary students at Worcester Technical High School in Worcester.

Participating restaurants and chefs will serve tastings of the dish they presented in competition.

The event also will feature wines, champagne, beers and special liquor tastings, plus live dance exhibitions, auctions and more.

Sir Jeremy Bell will demonstrate how to saber a bottle of champagne.

More than 25 chefs will compete for the title of Worcester's Best Chef in three categories: Asian, Fine Dining and Dessert.

The winners in each category will cook their way through another round of competition for the title, Worcester's Best Chef — Top Toque. The chefs will create a dish using identical ingredients contained in a mystery box.

Judging criteria for Worcester's Best Chef competition will be based on official rules and guidelines used by the American Culinary Federation.

I will be one of the judges of the competition, with executive chef Paul Wilson of Pepper's Fine Foods Catering in Northboro, and president of the Massachusetts Culinary Association; executive chef/owner Stanley J. Nicas of the Castle Restaurant in Leicester; executive pastry chef/owner Alina Eisenhauer of Sweet in Worcester; Christina Andrianopoulos, president of the Omega Marketing Group and talk show host of "Dining Out MetroWest"; Chris Liazos, former owner (40 years) of the Webster House Restaurant in Worcester; executive chef Michael Giletto of Cherry Valley Country Club in Skillman, N.J.; Bernie Whitmore of Pulse magazine in Worcester, and SFC Damion Orr of the U.S. Army Culinary Division.

Guests will cast votes for the winner in the People's Choice Award.

At a recent judges' briefing in the Beechwood Hotel in Worcester, celebrity judge Michael Giletto said he looked forward to the chefs' competition. "Worcester has talented chefs," said Giletto, who competed on the Food Network's hit series "Chopped" at the same time as Alina Eisenhauer of Sweet. Eisenhauer invited Giletto to Worcester to be a guest chef.

The two chefs will prepare a dinner Jan. 23 at the James Beard House in New York.

Giletto said his style of food reflects sophisticated, contemporary American cuisine with Mediterranean influences. His focus is on locally grown and seasonal ingredients. Impeccable presentation and cutting-edge menu choices create a memorable dining experience, he said.

Giletto works with Sterling Silver Premium Meats to create recipes, and in March he will help launch the company's "culinary-inspired meals in a kit." The product will be introduced on the East Coast, he said.

FYI: 2008 Worcester's Best Chef judges awards: First place, Yama Zakura Sushi Bar and Fusion Cuisine in Northboro, chef/owner Laddavanh "Anna" Bouphavichith; runner-up, Via Alto 27 in Clinton, chef Matrias Farias; second runner-up, Cedar Street Restaurant in Sturbridge, executive chef/owner William Nemeroff.

People's Choice Award: Baba Sushi Bar and Restaurant in Worcester, chefs/co-owners Wilson Wang and Mike Zhang; runner-up, Rovezzi's Ristorante in Sturbridge, executive chef/owner Christopher Rovezzi; second runner-up, Cedar Street Restaurant in Sturbridge, executive chef/owner William Nemeroff.

Join with other foodies in celebrating 2010 Worcester's Best Chef.

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Leo's Ristorante, 11 Leo Turo Way (Brackett Court), Worcester, offers a prefix meal special Sunday through Thursday. Appetizer, entrée and dessert cost \$15.95. There are five to six entrées to choose from.

The restaurant also has a Wednesday special in the lounge. Buy one large pizza and get one free. The 2-for-1 offer is available from 4:30 p.m. until closing.



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Owner Lee Hanson said her mother, Rosemary Turo, makes the pizza.

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Niche Hospitality Group and Habitat for Humanity — MetroWest/Greater Worcester will have a French food and wine tasting from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. Feb. 3 at Bocado Tapas Wine Bar, 82 Winter St., Worcester.

It's open to the public. Contributions, \$25 per person, benefit Habitat for Humanity — MetroWest/Greater Worcester.

The tasting will include French food specialties and more than 10 French wines. Reservations: rsvp@nichehospitality.com.

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This is a great partnership of two local companies.

Harpoon Brewery and Island Creek Oysters in Duxbury will brew a Limited Edition Oyster Stout.

Harpoon brewer Katie Tame will brew the 30th installment of the Harpoon 100 Barrel Series, the brewery's line of limited edition beers, today.

Skip Bennett, owner of Island Creek Oysters, will join Tame on the brewhouse platform, shucking hundreds of freshly harvested oysters from Duxbury Bay to add to the brew.

The one-of-a-kind, limited-batch creation has a rich body and a smooth feel that comes from a combination of roasted barley and chocolate rye malts, according to Harpoon. The roasted notes of the stout blend beautifully with the briny, mineral flavors of the oysters. An addition of hops adds a hint of bitterness and aroma to balance the sweetness from the malt combination.

The Harpoon 100 Barrel Series Island Creek Oyster Stout will be available early next month in 22-ounce bottles and on draft at select retailers and restaurants throughout New England.

Tame of Harpoon said, "This beer is not only a merging of two great New England offerings, it is also a merging of history. Stouts have long been paired with oysters, though seldom brewed with them. This is our contemporary twist on an age-old tradition. We hope beer and oyster lovers have as much fun drinking it as we had brewing it."

We'll let you know.

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Complimentary wine tasting from 5 to 7 p.m. Friday and 4 to 7 p.m. Saturday at Panzano Provviste e Vino, 154 Turnpike Road, Southboro.

On the tasting table: Wines from the vineyard, Tenuta Delle Terre Nere, Marco DeGrazia.

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Ed Hyder's Mediterranean Marketplace, 408 Pleasant St., Worcester, will dish out tasting samples from 5:30 to 8 p.m. today at the Worcester Art Museum's Third Thursdays: Music, Tastings & Art event at the museum.

Free to members, \$10 for nonmembers. There will be a cash bar, live music and guided gallery tour.

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An in-store tasting and seminar of "The Wines of Bordeaux" at 7 p.m. Wednesday at Friendly Discount Liquors, 1167 Providence Road, Whitinsville.

Free admission. RSVP to (508) 234-7951. Wines tasted that evening will be offered at 20 percent discount.

Randy Sheahan, editor of "Quarterly Review of Wines," will be guest speaker.

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Celebrate January National Soup Month with this terrific recipe from the test kitchens of Swanson.

Corn and Red Pepper Chowder: Heat 2 tablespoons vegetable oil in a 4-quart saucepan over medium heat. Add 1 large, diced sweet onion (about 1 cup) and cook until tender. Stir in ¼ cup all-purpose flour and 2 cloves minced garlic. Cook and stir for 1 minute. Stir in 6 cups Swanson Chicken Broth (Regular, Natural Goodness or Certified

Organic) and 2 medium Yukon gold potatoes, diced (about 2 cups). Heat to a boil. Reduce the heat to low and cook for 20 minutes or until the potatoes are tender. Stir in 2 cups fresh whole kernel corn or 1 package (10 ounces) frozen whole kernel corn and 1 jar (7 ounces) roasted red peppers, drained and chopped. Cook for 10 minutes. Add ½ cup heavy cream, if desired, and about a quarter of 1/3 cup chopped fresh basil. Season to taste. Divide soup among six serving bowls. Sprinkle each serving of soup with remaining basil.

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Space still empty at the former TJ's Seafood Bar & Grille, 452 Southbridge St., Auburn.

Heard any rumors?

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Mark Waxler, general manager of the Beechwood Hotel in Worcester, recently gave me a tour of the hotel's restaurant that is under construction. The new digs should be open in the spring, he said. "Probably, May."

It's going to be a fab place to dine and wine.

I'll dish more later.

If you have a tidbit for this column, call (508) 868-5282. Send e-mail to bhoulefood@gmail.com.

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