



Contact: Cindy Jewell
(831) 728-1773

California Giant Announces Finalists in Chef Invitational Showdown

(June 1, 2018 – Watsonville, CA) WATSONVILLE, CA - California Giant Berry Farms is pleased to announce today the five finalists that will attend and compete in their first annual Chef Invitational showdown on July 10, 2018.

The Chef Invitational was launched in March by California Giant Berry Farms Director of Foodservice, Tom Smith, to further cement relationships with key members of the foodservice industry and recognize their talented chefs that create innovative recipes with California Giant brand berries. Additionally, this new arsenal of chef developed recipes will provide inspiration to the thousands of consumers in the company database.

Professional chefs from Markon, Renaissance Food Group, Sysco and US Foods will each have chefs competing in a showdown before a live audience and panel of judges for the title of 2018 California Giant Top Chef. Seven distributor companies submitted recipes created by chefs within their network in hopes of being one of the coveted finalists traveling to Monterey, California for the showdown at Tehama Golf Club.

Dave Parker, Executive Chef for Tehama Golf Club provided valuable guidance on the actual process of selecting the five finalists. "Being able to be a part of this exciting project has been a great experience. Having the difficult task of choosing the top applicants was the most challenging part. With so many exciting recipes and mouthwatering pictures to look at made our job that much tougher. After much debate, we decided on the top 5 recipes. We are all excited to see what the chefs can create during the showdown". The five finalists packing their bags for a three-day trip to the central coast are:

Ty Baloca, Chef/Product Development for Renaissance Food Group
Black and blues Shrimp Kinalaw

Shane Henderson, Chef, Ben E. Keith/Markon
Strawberry Jalapeno Pancakes with Mixed Berry Syrup and Duck Wings

Matthew Lauer, Chef, Sysco
Marinated Wild Boar with Pickled Berry Salad

Luis Reyes, chef, Sysco
Berry, Tomato Beet Salad

Laura Vaughn, Brands Chef, US Foods
Blueberry Lavender Financier, Raspberry Sorbet & Blackberry Compote

“We were surprised and very pleased with the quantity and the caliber of recipes we received by this wide network of professionals.” says Tom Smith Director of Foodservice. “We are so excited to bring these five chefs to California and compete in an event where we get to see the recipes come off the page and prepared in front of us with the opportunity to taste each one”, adds Smith.

The three-day event filled with tours and social events will culminate with a showdown on July 10, 2018 where each chef will prepare their recipe entry side by side. Judges for the showdown will include Chef Dave Parker and professional chefs from the Monterey and Carmel area along with a representative from the trade press. The chef showdown will also feature sponsors from the Monterey area serving local wines, cheeses, olive oil, and chocolate while guests have the chance to watch each chef in action. The top five chefs will each re-create their winning recipes at the beautiful Tehama Golf Club competing for the title of 2018 California Giant Top Chef.

Guests attending the event in July will have the opportunity to taste each recipe created for the judges and vote for a People’s Choice award in addition to the professional judge’s award. “We expect a group of about 50 people to attend and enjoy the ocean view while tasting the innovative berry offerings, sipping wine and following up with a delicious local cheese or chocolate” adds Smith.

The chef bios, photos, and recipes are all featured on a new page within the California Giant website along with additional details on the event in July. Many of the recipes received as part of the competition will be added to www.calgiant.com with custom icon identifying them as ‘Chef Invitational’ recipes.

The winning recipe will be featured at the California Giant Berry Farms booth at the PMA Foodservice Conference in Monterey, CA in July. Further details about the promotion can be obtained by visiting <http://foodservice.calgiant.com/>

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