

And The Winner Is...

PHOTOS BY ALEX LANDEEN

Everyone was a winner at the 5th Annual Tucson Culinary Festival this year. Guests enjoyed a fabulous weekend of margarita tastings, culinary classes, international foods, and wine tastings, a world class brunch and the exciting Copper Chef Challenge.

TUCSON'S FAVORITE BEVERAGE

Cuvee World Bistro continues to lay claim to the *World's Best Margarita* as the winner of the Tucson Culinary Festival's World Margarita Championship for the second year in a row. They defended their title against eight other restaurants in the World Margarita Championship held at Cuvee World Bistro on Thursday, October 4.

Cuvee's winning concoction, The Grandmaringerita won the judges over with a traditional recipe spiked with a hint of ginger. Last year's winning bartender, Shelley Moe, worked with Mitch Levy, Cuvee's owner; and this year's bartender, Valerie Gradillas, to come up with the winning recipe. The Papagayo Margarita by Maria Mazon won judge's second place, while Jeffrey Hughes' Traditional Classic Margarita from Jonathans' Cork was awarded third place.

In the People's Choice vote, El Charro's Funky Cold Margarita by bartender Sasha Sanchez was the top crowd pleaser, Papagayo took second place and Cuvee's margarita came in third.

In last year's competition each restaurant was encouraged to experiment with different flavors to create their margarita. This year the focus was on finding the most perfect traditionally prepared margarita. Cup

ROASTED MINI SWEET PEPPERS STUFFED WITH GOAT CHEESE, CHIPOLTE GLAZED CHICKEN WITH ROSEMARY POLENTA CUBES, PETITE POCKETS PUFF PASTRY, GLAZED APRICOT WITH RICOTTA CHEESE DIPPED IN PECANS, ZUCCHINI CAKES WITH GARLIC SOUR CREAM SAUCE FROM PETITE PEA CATERING & FINE FOODS

JONATHAN LANDEEN, JONATHAN'S CORK

JALAPEÑO BACON WRAPPED SHRIMP STUFFED WITH QUESO FRESCO FROM JONATHAN'S CORK





WHITE CHOCOLATE COWBOY HAT WITH CITRUS PASTE STUFFED WITH A WHITE MOOSE AND WHITE SPONGE CAKE WITH RASPBERRY SAUCE, MADE BY FREDRICK ROBERT, EXECUTIVE PASTRY CHEF AT THE WYNN, LAS VEGAS



DOUG LEVY, FEAST



EL CHARRO'S "FUNKY COLD MARGARITA" BY BARTENDER SASHA SANCHEZ (POURING)

Café at Hotel Congress, Chad's Steakhouse and Saloon, Red Sky Café, Rio Café, and Terra Cotta were also contestants. Nearly 200 people attended the championships at Cuvee.

COPPER CHEF CHALLENGE

Two of Tucson's favorite chefs duked it out on cook-tops and cuisinarts at the 2007 Tucson Culinary Festival Copper Chef Competition on October 7th at Loew's Ventana Canyon. Defending his title as the 2006 champion was Chef Doug Levy, owner of the popular restaurant, Feast. With his brother Chef Mitch Levy (owner of Cuvee Bistro) acting as his sous chef and audience member Robert Cashdollar—whose high bid won him the position as apprentice sous chef—the Levy team was formidable.

Copper Chef Challenger Chef Jonathan Landeen, owner of longtime Tucson favorite Jonathan's Cork was up to the test. Chef Landeen's team consisted of guest Chef Tim Buckingham of Bucks Grill in Moab, Utah as his sous chef, and audience member Todd Martin, who bid \$250 for the opportunity to be apprentice sous chef on the team.

Both teams were outstanding and judging was close. Best creative use of the primary secret ingredient—grass fed Filet Mignon from the farms of Double Check in Dudleyville, Ariz., and secondary secret ingredient, Arizona pistachios—was the key to victory. The beef and all fresh produce items were supplied by the Community Food Bank Farmers Market vendors and were locally grown. A full pantry of kitchen staples as well as an array of fresh spices provided by Flavorbank Spice Market was made readily available to both teams.

Landeen and his team chopped, sautéed, and sizzled their way to victory with their winning dishes which included Goat Cheese Stuffed Filet with chili and apple sauce, and turned roasted potatoes; Steak Tartare made with olive oil, egg yolk, garlic onions, and pistachios placed on a bed of greens, topped with pomegranate seeds and served with sweet potato chips; and beef vegetable soup.

Chef Landeen is primed and ready for next year's challenge but more importantly is thrilled by the support the festival as a whole has received from the community.

"If we are able to showcase the outstanding flavors of Tucson and have it benefit some very worthy causes while we have fun doing it, what more can you ask for," he said after being crowned the winner.

Proceeds from the weekend benefit the Community Food Bank and New Beginnings for Women & Children. The 2008 Tucson Culinary Festival is scheduled for October 23 - 26 and will once again take place at the beautiful Loews Ventana Canyon Resort.