

**REGIONAL QUALIFIER FOR THE CANADIAN
CULINARY CHAMPIONSHIP**

Providing young Canadians the opportunity to be extraordinary through sport, music and food.



Edward Lam of Ujiro Japanese Restaurant wins gold at Winnipeg's Great Kitchen Party

Winnipeg! A day of chilly cold but dazzling prairie sunlight; an evening of music and excitement! The Kitchen Party loves this city: it was from here that our first ever Canadian Culinary Champion came – Chef Makoto Ono – back in the early innings of this century. His name brought a cheer from the sold-out crowd of 400 last night, as did the sensational music provided by our musicians led by Jim Cuddy, with Anne Lindsay, Devin Cuddy, Sam Polley, and Melissa McClelland and Luke Doucet of Whitehorse. There was much dancing in the aisles and the band played late into the night to the delight of all.

From a culinary perspective, things were also rocking, with many irresistible dishes, including the VIP offering from Emily Butcher, who won gold in 2019. She found some perfect persimmons in the market – the first of the season – and paired them with cured arctic char to create a gorgeous appetizer. Chef Emily also joined the posse of judges led by our Senior Judge for Winnipeg, Barbara O'Hara (chef, baker, restaurateur, post-secondary educator Pastry Arts, field to fork gardener, hospitality focused), that also featured Jesse Friesen (Executive Chef, Academy Hospitality. 2-time CGKP gold medalist, Winnipeg) and Mike Green (Peg City Grub scribe, former CBC Radio food columnist, MasterChef top 5). Very sadly, our other long-serving judge, Christine Hanlon, tested positive for COVID yesterday morning and we had to do our best without her. Here's how it all went down.

We awarded our bronze medal to Pamela Kirkpatrick of Bonnie Day Bistro. Her background is in pastry and she drew on her knowledge and artistry to create tiny perfect cippolini onion tartes tatins – two for each plate. The rich puff pastry was sweetened with a little onion jam made with balsamic vinegar and maple syrup while the concentric rings of white onion were finished with a scorching from a blow torch. Unabashedly sweet as slow-cooked onions can be, the richness was offset by a classic saskatoon berry gastrique studded with whole berries. A jaunty crisp made from melted Trappist cheese (similar to raclette) finished this immensely satisfying dish, refreshed by a glass of a local cider, the delicate, dry and aromatically floral Kerr Cider from Next Friend Cider.

Brent Genyk of Harth Mozza and Wine Bar won the silver medal – and the People's Choice award for his splendid tuna dish. Two thick slices of prime albacore tuna, lightly cured with salt, sugar, coriander, citrus peel and Szechuan pepper, were the main event. Each piece was presented in an identical way, allowing the judges to take apart and analyze one, then experience the second as an

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integrated mouthful. Chef had spooned a little of a house-made condiment onto the sleek fish – a “chili crisp” of dried ground chili, garlic, shallot and mushroom powder in olive oil. Here was an opulent preserved lemon aioli; there some fresh orange to cut the richness. Shavings of fennel, lightly pickled for a sweet-sour touch, provided a necessary vegetable component. A crunchy squid-ink tapioca crisp finished the dish. It was a pocket-sized symphony of bold flavours with a nicely judged, slow-building chili heat. Chef’s pairing was the subtle, elegant 2019 Grüner Veltliner from Winemakers Cut in the Okanagan, a wine with charming floral and white pepper notes.

Our gold medallist and new Winnipeg champion is Edward Lam of Yujiro Japanese Restaurant. His exquisite, whimsical plating delighted the eye before we tasted anything! The heart of the dish was a lamb tsukune – a traditional Japanese meatball made of ground lamb held together not with any binding such as flour or breadcrumb but with a little of the sauce that accompanied it. This was a lamb tare demi-glace reduced from a stock made from the lamb rib fat, shank and bones. Having formed the meatball, Chef dipped it into the sauce, torched it, then dipped it in again just before her served it, with a spoonful more sauce beside it. The meatball itself was playfully presented on a slender stick so one could eat it like a popsicle. Three other components completed the dish. First a small pool of anchovy-flavoured yogurt – a dip for the meatball. Next, a cube of wintermelon, braised for only four minutes in a broth of oyster sauce, rice wine, garlic and shallot, then refrigerated in the liquid overnight so that the vegetable retained its texture but was fully infused with flavour. On top of it, Chef sprinkled a pinch of what looked like yellow saffron but was actually finely shredded dried scallop and garlic. The final element was a marvel of the miniaturist’s art – a seaweed buckwheat cookie the size and thickness of a loonie, topped with three different purées – one of parsnip mixed with a kombu-dashi paste, one of kabocha with sweet soy, and a final dot of puréed kohlrabi and celery leaf – a medley of root flavours in a single bite. Chef’s chosen wine was perfect with the lamb – the 2020 Nate’s Vineyard Syrah from Nichol Vineyard and Estate, Naramata, BC.

Congratulations to Edward Lam! We will taste his wonderful food again in Ottawa next February as he competes at the Canadian Culinary Championship.