



**REGIONAL QUALIFIER FOR THE CANADIAN
CULINARY CHAMPIONSHIP**

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Moncton Report 2025

Chefs from New Brunswick and PEI gathered in Moncton Friday for a night that took the concept of a maritime kitchen party and gave it a spiffy culinary polish. Once again, Moncton – the city that provided us with our 2025 Canadian Culinary Championship silver medalist – proved that it is a serious player in the Canadian food scene with five chefs delivering five exceptional dishes.

It was a treat to have students from the New Brunswick Community College in attendance, both helping to serve and presenting a dish to the guests: a sous vide octopus with chorizo, that looked sophisticated enough to be in competition.

With so much great food on offer, it makes the job for us judges a pleasure but means that we must be extremely mindful and focussed with our scoring as only the subtlest differences will separate chefs working at this level.

Fortunately, the panel in Moncton is more than up to the task. Joining me this year was a dream team of culinary heavy hitters including Chris Aerni, the chef/owner of the renowned Rossmount Inn, Evan Smith, chef instructor at New Brunswick Community College, sommelier and executive director Food & Beverage Atlantic, Tammy Brideau and Susan O'Keefe: co-chair World Wine & Food Expo. Head Judge for Moncton, Emmanuel Charretier, chef Instructor of Hospitality and Tourism at New Brunswick Community College was, as always, instrumental in reaching out to our chefs and helping secure such a phenomenal lineup of talent.

Also joining us as our very special VIP guest chef and judge, Jordan Holden, last year's gold medal winner here in Moncton and Silver Medallist at the Canadian Culinary Championship in Ottawa where he outperformed chefs from nine other cities to take climb the podium.

Our first dish of the night set the tone with Chef Lucy Morrow of Brickhouse Kitchen & Bar in Charlottetown presenting a little three-bite, brown butter tartelette with scallops, apple and herbs and fresh mascarpone that I could have eaten 12 of. A



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golden slick of hot honey and a classic, pickle studded smashed potato salad paid homage to PEI's most celebrated crop. Alongside, a bright orange cocktail, the hue and texture of a spiked smoothie, featured Empress Gin with a thick puree of tart, tangy, barely sweet seabuckthorn berries.

Tony's Bistro Chef, Jacob Ward, was up next and delivered with a precise, geometric arrangement featuring tiny cubes of earthy beet gel, a bubbly hemisphere of beet foam, and cuboids of ruby, beet panna cotta and smoked salmon, punctuated with crunchy, sweet disks of sesame tuiles. The dish expertly balanced smoky, earthy and sweet elements, allowing the peachy, apricot and grapefruit zest flavours of Nova Scotia's iconic wine, Benjamin Bridge, Nova 7 – a blend of muscat, Ortega, Riesling, Geisenheim, l'Acadie and Vidal – to support and bring additional complexity.

The evening wasn't all seafood focussed, however. True to his name, Dalvay by the Sea, PEI chef Jamie Power produced a powerhouse of a plate featuring fennel and coriander crusted smoked PEI beef cheek that, through patient sous vide cooking and a deft touch with the smoke, was intense, meaty, luscious and immensely accomplished. Adding to the deep, resonant flavours was a sticky dark chocolate and horseradish demi-glace. Chef Power's beverage pairing was cleverly foreshadowed by the apple and hascap chutney that carried through expertly to Island Honey Wine Company's, Honeyberry Haskap Mead. The wine's body and heft, savoury, fruit leather flavours and subtle oakiness standing up to and underscoring the deep savouriness on the plate.

Taking home the people's choice award for the evening was Lost and Found Ice Cream owner and chef, Jonathan Morrison. His elegant take on scallops, lightly poached in a brown butter vinaigrette showed phenomenal, classic technique. The sensible and flavourful addition of toasted hazelnuts and corn espuma took the dish from something delicious to downright showstopping.

We judges had no issue with the people's choice and recognized the quality on offer, but after the scores were tallied it with Atelier Tony chef, Niguel De Leon, in his second competition, who scored highest marks and took home gold on the evening.



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Working in a style that drew on his Asian heritage while using the finest local ingredients, chef De Leon delivered a dry aged duck dumpling with preserved berries alongside a garnet slice of duck breast, gently pickled cucumbers, a dollop of onion foam and a technically flawless jus. It was an Acadian take on traditional Peking Duck – a culinary genre judge Chris Aerni dubbed Acasian – and it was impeccable. Henry of Pelham's intense, spicy 2023, Baco Noir, Ontario played off the berry flavours in the dish and carried on the beautiful flavours in the sauce, extending both to great effect.

Our search for the next Canadian Culinary Champion is now two cities down and already a high bar has been established. If the quality of the dishes stays as high as we've seen in Moncton and Ottawa, we are in for a blockbuster year!