



REGIONAL QUALIFIER FOR THE CANADIAN
CULINARY CHAMPIONSHIP

Ensuring young Canadians have equitable access to
healthy food, music education and sport opportunities.



Edmonton Culinary Report 2025

Always a highlight on the Canadian Culinary Championship qualifying tour, Edmonton rose to the occasion again with a strong, diverse showing from the chefs and an even more impressive showing from the 500 plus guests who brought great enthusiasm to the evening.

Eight chefs competed this year, representing not just Edmonton, but a globally diverse array of personal and culinary backgrounds from Metis to Costa Rican, Mexican to Enoch Cree. Tasked with assembling a winning lineup from this group was as fine a judging panel as you'll find anywhere including a pair of Edmonton's most respected chefs, Brad Smoliak, author of the Canadian Barbecue Cookbook and chef/owner of KITCHEN and Chris Wood Executive Chef for the St Michaels Health Group. From the food writing and media side we welcomed Twyla Campbell, editor of Modern Luxuria and co-author of Prairie, as well as our wonderful head judge, writer, magazine editor, publisher of The Tomato food & drink, Mary Bailey.

The chefs would also be tasked with cooking for two judges who know exactly what it takes to compete and succeed at this competition: former Edmonton Gold Medalist and Canadian Culinary Championships Bronze Medalist, Serge Belair as well as last year's Gold Medal winner from Edmonton, Chef Doreen Prie from the Royal Mayfair Golf Club. Chef Prie joined us despite a broken leg from having, only days before, been run over by an out of control electric scooter.

Among the evening's many hits, Chef Robert Wick's "Roots of Devotion" told a story of the Prairies with a 48-hour braised short rib. Sourced from Nonay Beef and surrounded by Erdmann's Farm vegetables, the dish layered richness and restraint: Swiss chard wrapped the meat in earthy tenderness, chaga-infused potatoes brought quiet depth, and a rutabaga purée glowed with caramelized sweetness. A glossy haskap demi-glace offered . Paired with *Mission Hill 2020 Quatrain*, its dark fruit and balanced acidity mirrored the dish's warmth.

Chef Levi Biddlecombe embraced the Japanese philosophy of balance in a plate that displayed real precision. Side-stripe prawns appeared in multiple forms — raw and lightly cured, nestled beside a tamago seasoned with prawn broth and miso, anchored



REGIONAL QUALIFIER FOR THE CANADIAN
CULINARY CHAMPIONSHIP

Ensuring young Canadians have equitable access to
healthy food, music education and sport opportunities.



by a sauce of roasted shells and wakame oil. A squid-ink tapioca cracker offered contrast and crunch, while tomato-lemon salad and micro shiso lifted the dish with brightness. The pairing — a citrus-kissed Big Rock Grasshopper Wheat Ale balanced effervescence and acidity, uniting sweetness and sea in perfect equilibrium.

Chef Abigail López Velasco's *"Love Letter to Canada"* traced her journey from Mexico to her adopted home through coast-to-coast ingredients. Her halibut mousseline, paired with jewel-bright beet-cured salmon, sat beneath a pickled onion veil, its delicacy anchored by a fennel-tarragon-celeriac sauce and earthy mushroom crumble. A beet-maple garnish — shaped as a Canadian maple leaf — crowned the dish with a patriotic touch. *Fielding 2021 Gamay* from Niagara lent red-fruit vibrancy and gentle acidity, tying ocean, forest, and prairie together in a unified note of belonging.

Chef Joseph Vuong closed the circle with *"Pork and Prairie Caviar"*, a tribute to Alberta's local bounty. His honey-and-herb-brined pork belly, wrapped in bruléed Erdmann's leeks, rested atop glistening haskap pearls from Rosy Farms. A tortilla moon and micro corn sprouts added sweetness and whimsy — a fond farewell to summer. Paired with *Flat Rock's 2023 Pinot Noir*, the dish showed style and flare.

Tulip Sandwich Shop chef Rose Colangelo drew on both her Costa Rican heritage, her Italian training and her beloved Prairies to create a dish that would go on to win the People's Choice award for the evening and earn her a Bronze from the judges. Her Farmer's gold arancini combined Costa Rican spiced rice with buttercup squash and corn into a delicate, but flavoursome take on the classic Sicilian rice balls. A creamy refried bean puree served as a base for the whole dish while smoky tomatoes a drop of crème fraîche and spicy chimichurri tied everything together expertly and allowed for Bent Stick brewery's zesty, Salinity Now pale ale to do a superb job refreshing.

Braven chef, Jason Greene worked backwards to create dish that would work best with his beverage pairing, a still velvet, non-carbonated, spontaneously fermented beer from Blind Enthusiasm that had been quietly maturing in bottles for 3 years. The brewery officially registered the beer with the AGLC (Alberta Gaming, Liquor and



**REGIONAL QUALIFIER FOR THE CANADIAN
CULINARY CHAMPIONSHIP**

Ensuring young Canadians have equitable access to
healthy food, music education and sport opportunities.



Cannabis) especially so it could be entered in the competition. With this remarkable wine-like beer, chef created a textbook pâté en croûte featuring pork shoulder and ground rabbit, surrounding an eye of foie gras, redolent with the herbaceous flavours of orange and licorice from the Amaro Nonino it was marinated in. Even more heady, exotic flavours were introduced thanks to chef's inclusion of his house-made five spice powder. An impressive dish worthy of its gold medal and people's choice winning status.

Chef Tyson Wright from the Old Red Barn made a strong case for the arrival of a distinctly Metis cuisine by combining his French and Indigenous heritage with some outstanding Alberta ingredients. Sych Family Farms Bison cheek was the centerpiece of his dish: slowly braised for hours and served with a black garlic demi-glace, pickled Saskatoon berries, confit parsnip puree and a pea shoot emulsion. Paired with Dirty Laundry's 2022 Kay's Syrah the already rich, dark fruit and stickiness of the bison and its demi were underscored by complementary elements in the wine. When the scores were tallied, the combination put chef Wright into first place and he became our fourth finalist as we continue the march towards crowning Canada's next Culinary Champion.