



REGIONAL QUALIFIER FOR THE CANADIAN  
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## St. John's Culinary Report 2025

Spirit of Spirit of the West brought the house down with their musical performance, but it was the spirit of Newfoundland and Labrador—its history, its heart, and its inventive culinary soul – that made the St. John's regional Gold Medal Plates event such a triumph. Set against the backdrop of the Atlantic, this year's gathering brought together a lineup of chefs who not only represented the province's bounty but also the deep connection between land, sea, and story that defines Newfoundland cuisine.

The judging panel this year was another celebration of local excellence. Head Judge **Roary Macpherson**, CGKP Senior Judge Newfoundland, father, husband, and culinary ambassador, once again led a stellar team of experts who embody the island's passion for food and community. Joining us were **Gabby Peyton**, beloved food and travel writer, **Ron Delaney**, tourism director and radio host, **Angie Ryan**, Culinary Olympian and operations manager at the School Lunch Association, **Maurizio Modica**, Italian-born but proudly Newfoundland-adopted chef, and **Denise King**, a veteran of over two decades in the local culinary scene and now mentor to the next generation at CONA.

Each of the evening's competitors brought an extraordinary level of creativity and heart to their dishes, telling stories that were as emotionally resonant as they were deliciously executed.

The night began with **Chef Ian Sheridan** of *Bang Belly Bistro*, who came in all the way from Fogo Island just to compete. His *Beetroot Rosette with Charred Lemon Aioli, Lacto-Fermented Partridgeberry, and Mustard Pickle* was a study in texture, color, and balance. A mousse of Fogo Island cod and Labrador Arctic char formed the dish's silky centerpiece, encased within crisp, jewel-toned beet petals. Each element—from the Tajín-dusted pickled celery to the chili-crisped honey vinaigrette—reflected Sheridan's joyful blend of humor and precision. Paired with Noble Ridge's *The Pink One*, a sparkling rosé from BC, the combination danced across the palate with a careful balance of acidity and silkiness. It was a dish that celebrated the province's identity while reminding diners that Newfoundland cuisine could be both soulful and cheeky and wowed the crowd enough to earn the evening's People's Choice Award.

Next came **Chef Mike Wozney** of *Soul Azteca Catering*, who brought the room on a cross-cultural journey that married his Newfoundland heritage with his wife's Mexican roots. His *Tikinixic Atlantic Cod Mosaic*—named for the ancient Mayan method of marinating fish in



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achiote and citrus—was visually stunning and conceptually ingenious. The cod roulade, wrapped and cooked sous-vide to retain every ounce of flavor, was accompanied by roasted pineapple gel, cilantro-lime pearls, burnt chive oil, and a blue corn tuille. The tapioca chicharron, dusted with onion ash, offered a subtle smoky note—a nod to traditional open-flame cooking. dish. Wayne Gretzky made an appearance in the form of then No. 99 Riesling from his own winery, providing a slick pairing that emphasised the tropical elements on the plate.

From *One Eared Goat*, **Chef Ange Dumaresque** gave one of the most moving presentations of the evening. Her *Symphony of Salmon: A Labrador Tribute* was not just a plate of food but a love letter to her late father and to the rugged beauty of Labrador. The dish showcased salmon three ways—confit, smoked butter, and a crisp salmon skin tuille with pistachio—and was accented by sweet corn purée, beetroot, bakeapple caviar, and foraged herbs like Alexander and Labrador tea. The pairing of Ungava Gin over iceberg ice offered clear, cold, and wild flavours, echoing the landscape that inspired her. It was a heartfelt dish that showed real talent and demonstrated that Dumaresque is a serious player in Newfoundland's exceptional culinary scene.

Representing *Vu Resto and Bar*, **Chef Lacey Coffin** offered a refined take on rustic nostalgia with her *Rabbit & Pistachio Terrine*. Born from memories of Port aux Basques hunting trips, her dish combined local game, chicken liver, Mt. Scio savoury tuiles, and bacon to produce a richly layered terrine that was both elegant and comforting. Accompanied by a bright wild berry chutney and beet-pickled gels, it struck a delicate balance of sweet, tart, and earthy. Paired with Mission Hill Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, the wine's dark fruit and vanilla notes elevated the dish's depth. Coffin's ability to transform a childhood staple into fine dining sophistication exemplified the culinary growth happening across Newfoundland's dining scene and earned her the evening's gold medal.

**Chef Cody Lambe** of *Blue Smoke BBQ* shifted the progression toward heartier fare with his *Slow Roasted Beef Terrine*. The dish was anchored by PEI beef pressed with foraged Hedgehog mushrooms from Barking Kettles, layered atop homemade Nan's bread and complemented by golden beets, garlic green emulsion, and a beet gel crafted from Lester's Farm produce. The pairing with Redstone Winery's 2022 Gamay Noir was spot on—its bright fruitiness cutting through the dish's rich, earthy intensity. Lambe's plate felt like the embodiment of comfort: a Sunday dinner reimagined through the lens of contemporary technique and the recipient of the silver medal.



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Closing out the competition, **Chef Brian Piercey** of *Bridie Molloy's/The Celtic Hearth* delivered a dish steeped in memory and maritime warmth. His *Slow-Braised PEI Brisket with Molasses and Pickled Rhubarb* drew from his upbringing in Hopeall, where Sunday dinners were sacred. Each component—creamed mushrooms, salt pork biscuits, roasted parsnip chips, golden beets—spoke of Newfoundland's hearty larder and the generosity of its kitchens. Paired with Landwash Brewery's *On Guard Canadian Pale Ale*, the dish harmonized sweetness, smoke, and nostalgia. Piercey's storytelling and authenticity made it an audience favorite and resulted in the evening's bronze medal.

The St. John's event once again proved that the island's culinary scene stands shoulder to shoulder with the country's best. Here, creativity grows from community, and every dish carries the imprint of the place it comes from. From the foraged partridgeberries to the hand-harvested herbs, from cod to rabbit to beef, the chefs of Newfoundland showed that tradition and innovation aren't opposites—they're two sides of the same story.