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Southern Cross sweeps awards at cook-off

By: Lisa Boushy | Iboushy@pinnaclemedialtd.com 12 December, 2014











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From left, the winners of the Sister Islands Cook-Off are Chef Luke Miller of the Southern Cross Club, who won Best Cayman Dish, Chef Manuel Desouza of the Southern Cross Club, Chef Diane Sherer of Pirate's Point, Chef Francisco Dias and Executive Chef Anu Christopher of the Southern Cross Club.

When Cayman's top chefs gathered for the annual Sister Islands Cook-Off last month, once again the Southern Cross Club team was named Grand Champion.

The cook-off is the primary fundraiser for the Sister Islands Tourism Association and continues to gain momentum each year, attracting many local supporters who get to enjoy a taste of world-class cuisine.

Jacques Scott was the primary sponsor of the cook-off at the Southern Cross Club resort, and local dive operators donated prizes for the raffle that helped raise additional funds for SITA. Money raised helps fund environmental awareness projects for Cayman Brac and Little Cayman.

Judges flew in from Grand Cayman to evaluate competitor skills and culinary creations. Judging was based on five categories: local dish, soup/appetizer, salad, entrée, and dessert. First and second place winners in each category received a cash prize and a Cayman National Nambe Trophy. Other prizes included a two-night stay at the Marriott Resort, a limited edition Guy Harvey print, and vouchers for Camana Bay, A.L. Thompson's and other local vendors. Tortuga Liquors donated a case of rum, and Jacques Scott donated a case of champagne. A case of Caybrew's local lager, White Tip, was also donated.

The team of judges was led by Chef Vidyadhara Shetty, owner of Blue Cilantro restaurant and head of the Cayman Culinary Society, and included chefs Keith Griffin and Tanya Foster. Deputy Premier and Minister of Tourism Moses Kirkconnell also made the trip from Cayman Brac for the event and handed out trophies to the winners.

Southern Cross's dining room doubled as the competition tasting room and was sealed off for the judging. After the winners were announced, guests were allowed to sample each dish; afterward, they dined under the stars on the beach and danced on the resort's pool deck.

Team Southern Cross Club was led by executive chef Anu Christopher and included chefs Francisco Dias, Manuel Desouza and Luke Miller. The team dominated the event, taking home four first-place trophies and five second-place prizes. The team's appetizer entry, "tiger shrimp Scotch bonnet peri peri on watermelon and corn salsa," won top honors as Grand Champion for the best dish. The team was also awarded the most points in the cook-off. The team's entrée, "ripe plantain and roasted bell pepper stuffed chicken supreme," was awarded Best Cayman Dish by the Cayman Culinary Society. Another first-place trophy was awarded for the team's soup/salad entrée: "purslane springs and muringa blossom salad with papaya seed vinaigrette and beet yoghurt." The recipe is included below for those who want to make the salad at home.

Both purslane and muringa blossoms are available in abundance locally, according to Chef Anu. "Local farmers can surely source them for anyone who is interested in trying this recipe at home," he said, "At the SCC, we would like to promote locally available produce ... We are proud that this dish came first in the appetizer/salad section of the competition. That is primarily the reason why we decided to highlight this dish out of all the 11 awards we won."

Jennifer Mills, Southern Cross Club's general manager and member of the cook-off committee, was happy with the 2014 event.

"It saw a higher and more professional level of competition than ever before, which we hope is a sign of this annual event growing and becoming a real 'must do' in the Cayman Islands, and something not to be missed," Mills said. "I could not be happier or prouder than I am of executive chef Anu and his brigade."

Purslane springs and muringa blossom salad with papaya seed vinaigrette and beet yoghurtServes 4

For the salad

- 2 cups purslane leaf springs
- 1 cup muringa blossoms
- 1 cup bulls blood beet micro greens

For the vinaigrette

- 1 dried tablespoon Papaya seed
- 2 ounces olive oil
- 1 ounce lime juice
- Salt and ground black pepper to taste

For the beet yoghurt

- 1 ounce plain yoghurt
- 1 teaspoon beet puree

Preparation

In a salad bowl, mix all the ingredients for the salad. Blend all ingredients for the vinaigrette in a high speed blender. Drizzle over the salad and mix thoroughly. Whisk the ingredients of the beet yoghurt and serve on the side. Serve on a chilled plate.

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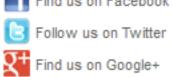
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