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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHEF AARON ALLEN OF COASTERRA CROWNED "CHEF OF THE FEST" AT THE 2019 SAN DIEGO BAY WINE + FOOD FESTIVAL®

Smoked Beet and Mushroom Taco Steals the Show At The Grand Tasting During Southern California's Largest Food and Wine Festival

San Diego, CA (November 26, 2019) – In conjunction with the American Culinary Federation (ACF), the [San Diego Bay Wine + Food Festival](#) ® announces the winners of this year's Chef of the Fest Competition. The annual competition brings top San Diego chefs head-to-head in a culinary competition judged blind by the San Diego Chapter of ACF along with guest judges.

This year's Chef of the Fest title went to Chef Aaron Allen of Coasterra for his dish, smoked beet and mushroom taco. San Diego Bay Wine + Food Festival® co-producer, Michelle Metter calls the competition, simply awesome.

"The Chef of the Fest competition continues to showcase a selection of the city's diverse culinary scene and top tier creative talent," continued Metter. "Acclaimed chefs awe both judges and attendees at the Grand Tasting. We are thrilled that 2019 marks the first year that an all vegetarian dish wins Chef of the Fest. We congratulate all of this year's competitors on a exceptional showcase of San Diego's flourishing scene."

This year, Chef's De Cuisine, a chapter of the American Culinary Federation, organized the judging of the Chef of the Fest Competition. Chefs de Cuisine President Board of Directors, Chef Don Williamson, was lead coordinator of the judging process. Five guest judges joined in responsibilities including:

1. Chef Suzette Gresham – Two-Starred Michelin Recipient and Executive Chef, Acquerello, San Francisco, CA

2. Chef Robert Phillips – Southern Regional Vice President, The American Culinary Federation, Los Angeles, CA

3. Chef Michel Malécot – Executive Chef and Owner, The French Gourmet, San Diego, CA

4. Chef Michael Schlow – Restaurateur, Schlow Restaurant Group

5. Chef Ricardo Santana – President, Chefs de Cuisine Association of San Diego, San Diego, CA

The 2019 Chef of the Fest Competition was judged using a blind-tasting format. Twenty-eight chefs were carefully narrowed down to first, second, and third place finalists and seven category winners using a graded point system. Participants were ranked based on cumulative scores considering the dish's presentation, flavor, innovation, quality of product, and preparation in the allotted time.

Chef Claudia Sandoval of MasterChef Latino and the Chefs de Cuisine Board of Director's President, Don Williamson, announced the top three finishers, category winners and the People's Choice Award. Awards were presented on Saturday, November 16 at the San Diego Bay Wine + Food Festival Grand Tasting.

The 2019 Chef of the Fest Competition results are as follows:

First Place Grand Prize Winner
Aaron Allen – Coasterra
Smoked Beet and Mushroom Taco | Blue Corn Tortilla | Avocado Mousse | Pickled Cabbage | Peanut Macha Salsa

Second Place Winner
Todd Nash – The Blind Burro
Duck Carnitas | Jalapeno-Cranberry Salsa | Avocado

Third Place Winner
Tim Eylens – Del's Hideout
Prime Brisket and Best Mac and Cheese | Maker's Mark Bourbon-Infused

Meat Category Winner
Tim Eylens – Del's Hideout
Prime Brisket and Best Mac and Cheese | Maker's Mark Bourbon-Infused

Poultry Category Winner
Todd Nash – The Blind Burro
Duck Carnitas | Jalapeno-Cranberry Salsa | Avocado

Maker's Mark Bourbon Infused Winner
Tim Eylens – Del's Hideout
Prime Brisket and Best Mac and Cheese | Maker's Mark Bourbon-Infused

Seafood Category Winner
Martin Mungula – Red O Taste of Mexico
Seafood Campechana | Shrimp | Squid | Tuna | Avocado | Serrano Tomato Broth

Vegetarian / Raw Category Winner

Aaron Allen – Coasterra
Smoked Beet and Mushroom Taco | Blue Corn Tortilla | Avocado Mousse | Pickled Cabbage | Peanut Macha Salsa

Dessert Winner
Joel Cammett + Tyler Shipton – BO-beau kitchen + garden
S'mores Never Grow Old | Flourless Chocolate Cake | Mesquite Graham Cracker | Smoked Sea Salt Marshmallow

Chefs placing first, second, and third in the Chef of the Fest competition were awarded in cash and prizes. The first place winner received a trip to Aruba from Aruba Tourism Authority, two Southwest Airlines tickets, and a South Coast Winery Gift Basket. All three chefs who placed were awarded cutting boards from John Boos & Co., Wolfe Knifes, Original Grain watches, and $4,500 in cash divided amongst them.

This year's wine and food festival also saw the return of the People's Choice Award. In addition to being evaluated by the esteemed panel of judges, Chef of the Fest competitors were also subject to the critiques of Grand Tasting attendees, who had opportunity to vote for their favorite Chef of the Fest dish. Chef James Montejano of Huntress took the "People's Choice Award" for his dish, duck Three Ways, which included smoked duck breast, duck wonton and Asian vegetables with duck jus.

SAN DIEGO BAY WINE + FOOD FESTIVAL®
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