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Creative Cooking Challenge

Angus members show off creative cooking skills in new cook-off competition.

by **Molly Witzel**

Ten teams competed in the first-ever Chef's Challenge competition hosted in conjunction with the Auxiliary-sponsored All-American *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) Cook-Off July 13 at the 2010 National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) in Denver, Colo.

The contest was open to National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) members ages 18-21 and adults ages 21 and older. Contestants

were allowed to enter as individuals or in teams of two for the event, which was coordinated by the American Angus Auxiliary.

Modeled after televised cooking competitions such as the Food Network's *Iron Chef*, the timed event was a test of skill and creativity. Participants were allowed one hour and 30 minutes to prepare an original

► **Above:** Chef Michael Ollier, originator of the concept for the Chef's Challenge, takes a picture of Myrna and Jennifer Sharpe, winners of the first-ever Chef's Challenge at the NJAS.

recipe from a specific CAB meat cut and secret ingredients announced the day prior to competition.

NJAA youth division secret ingredients were sweet corn, rosemary and potatoes. Adult division secret ingredients included poblano peppers and mushrooms. Both divisions used CAB tri-tip meat.

Winners were selected based on use of the secret ingredients, display and taste. Judges for the contest were CAB Corporate Chef Michael Ollier, Wooster, Ohio; Ardyce O'Neill, O'Neill Angus Farm, Logan, Iowa, and co-founder of the Cook-Off; and American Angus Association Director Phil Trowbridge, Ghent, N.Y.

Adult division winners

Living in a different state did not stop Myrna Scharpe, Arlington, Minn., from teaming up with her daughter Jennifer, who resides in Westminster, Colo.

"When I saw [the contest] come out, it was like 'I've got to try this,'" Myrna says. "I watch a lot of the cooking shows, so I thought it would be a lot of fun to try something like that."

The mother-daughter team won first place

Grilled CAB® Tri-Tip with Rosemary and Red Wine Sauce

- 4 CAB tri-tip steaks or roast, cut into steaks
- ½ tsp. kosher salt (if desired)
- 1 Tbs. ground white pepper
- 2 Tbs. olive oil
- 1 Tbs. lard
- 1 Tbs. butter
- ¼ cup onion, finely chopped
- 2 Tbs. fresh rosemary, finely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1 portabella mushroom, chopped
- 1½ cups dry, red cooking wine
- 1 cup low-sodium beef stock
- ½ tsp. dark brown sugar
- small amount of cornstarch to thicken sauce, if needed

Season steaks with salt and white pepper to desired taste.
Sauté steaks in a hot skillet with lard, butter

- and olive oil. Reduce heat to medium. Cook for several minutes or until juices start to cook out of the top. Flip steaks and cook to desired doneness. Move meat to griddle to keep warm.
- Brown onions and mushrooms in the skillet. More butter and lard may be added.
- Add half the rosemary and garlic, cook for approximately 20 seconds.
- Add cooking wine and increase heat. Boil for two minutes.
- Add beef stock, sugar and meat juices, collected from the griddle. Boil for 10 minutes or until liquid is reduced by half.
- Add remaining rosemary and garlic to mixture.
- Arrange with steak on plate and serve.

Source: Winning youth division recipe submitted by Allison Dubs, Billings, Mont.



PHOTOS BY SHAUNA ROSE HERMEL

► CAB Chef Michael Ollier observes the presentation of one of the dishes prepared for the contest's three judges to evaluate.

in the adult division of the Chef's Challenge contest with their original recipe for "Grilled CAB Tri-Tip with Ancho Seasoning and Roasted Southwest Vegetables." (See "What's Cooking at CAB," page 109 for recipe.)

"We're not professional chefs by any means," Jennifer says.

The pair says they combined different recipes for the winning creation.

"The National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) and the American Dietetics Association have a cookbook called *Healthy Beef Cooking*," Jennifer says. The cookbook features recipes by Chef Richard Chamberlain of Chamberlain's Steak and Chop House, Addison, Texas (Dallas area). "Chamberlain put together quite a few recipes in there, and what we really did was take a couple of those different recipes, adapted them with the poblano peppers and changed them to make our recipe."

The Scharpes say they practiced into the night after the secret ingredients were announced to make sure their recipe was right and ready to go for competition the next day.

"We probably had an advantage over the others," says Jennifer. "I live in Westminster, so we were able to practice and take everything that I had from home, and not have to travel it as far."

The duo says their goal was to enhance the flavor of the CAB product, rather than cover it up.

"I think the one thing we wanted to do was show that with CAB we could serve it as a roast," Myrna says. "We didn't have to hide it under anything or doctor it up. We just put a rub on it that gave it a little flavor, but the quality of the CAB just comes through."

In addition to creating the winning recipe, spending time together was an added bonus

of the competition, Myrna says. "It was fun for me to work with Jennifer because she's been living in Colorado now for a year, and we only get to see her occasionally."

The Scharpes agree, time was the biggest challenge they faced during the competition.

"We definitely recommend the Chef's Challenge," Jennifer says. "It was a great competition, and we think other people should give it a try."

Placing second in the adult division of the competition was Dru Uden of Franklin, Neb. Placing third was the other mother-daughter team, comprised of Rachel and Gretchen Frost of Tallula, Ill.

NJAA youth division

Allison Dubs, Billings, Mont. can add winning a cooking contest to her list of NJAA accomplishments. She placed first in the youth division of the Chef's Challenge.

"I've been cooking since I was about 4, or at least trying to," Dubs says. "I remember when I was really little I would put flour and water together, then stick it in the microwave, and expect something good to come out, which didn't really work."

Dubs has progressed since her days of flour and water. Her winning recipe includes ingredients such as rosemary, red cooking wine, beef broth, brown sugar, onions and mushrooms.

"I kind of used a recipe, but I ran out of time," she says. "I ended up throwing some things together."

Like the Scharpe team, Dubs says the most difficult part of the contest is the time limit. "I've never been timed on anything before,



► Allison Dubs (left), Billings, Mont., and Taylor Short, Mansfield, Mo., prepare their recipes during the first-ever Chef's Challenge. Dubs placed first and Short, third, in the competition.

and I didn't know how long it would take to wash and cut the vegetables."

Preparation for the Chef's Challenge is difficult since the secret ingredients and CAB cut are not announced prior to NJAS, Dubs says. "I just cooked a couple extra times before we left. I tried out some different recipes and different types of cooking."

While Dubs says she enjoys cooking in general, her favorite part of the competition was cooking for other people.

She says while she's always wanted to compete in a cooking contest, she has never competed in a cooking competition like the Chef's Challenge. She says she enjoyed her time at NJAS and is looking forward to the Chef's Challenge competition next year.

"I will enter again," Dubs says. "I don't know how I'm going to get all my pots and pans from Billings to Pennsylvania, but I'm going to find a way."

Placing second in the junior division of the competition was Katy Satree of Montague, Texas; placing third was Taylor Short of Mansfield, Mo.

First-place awards for each division included a \$100 cash prize sponsored by Friends of the Black Kettle and a CAB logo jacket.



Editor's Note: Molly Witzel is the 2010 American Angus Association summer intern, working in the Public Relations and Communications Department.