

Vidalia Chef Takes Fire on the Rock

Written by Submitted
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The heat was on April 24 as two of Blowing Rock's premier chefs battled it out during the "Got To Be N.C." Competition Dining Series Fire on the Rock-Blowing Rock finals. Chef Sam Ratchford and his team from Vidalia took home the bragging rights after six fierce courses split with Twig's John Dean. Ratchford will move on to the Fire on the Rock finale April 30 at the Meadowbrook Inn & Suites against Asheville's Adam Hayes from the Red Stag Grill, and battle for the coveted "Red Chef Jacket." The winner will advance to the Final Fire series in November 2013 to vie for the 2013 championship title and a cash prize. At Blowing Rock's Meadowbrook Inn & Suites, over 120 diners immersed themselves in the night of deliciousness while they eagerly awaited the final results from event host and founder, Jimmy Crippen. Crippen discussed the day's events with each chef before revealing the scores for all six courses. Competition Dining challenges the chefs to use featured ingredients grown or produced in North Carolina. This battle, Blind Squirrel Beer and Wild Ramps were the chosen components to bewitch the judges and a full house of diners. The chefs were required to use the Blind Squirrel Beer in all of their three courses and the ramps in just two. They were not privy to the secret ingredients until noon on competition day. Both chefs came to impress. Ratchford's first dish was duck confit egg rolls and ramp cole slaw with Nut Brown vinaigrette, Tripel blackberry barbeque sauce, and ramp-watercress chimichurri. He followed that with his highest scoring dish, his marinated Certified Angus Beef petit filet, which featured Nut Brown battered onion rings, Belgian Tripel braised collards, red wine pickled ramps, ramp oil, Nut Brown demi and ramp cornbread. He finished the competition with Tripel banana ice cream cake. The cake featured a Tripel banana beer bread crust, Nut Brown caramel, fruit coulis, spiced walnuts and banana scallops. Dean's highest scoring dish of the night was his German apple ramp cake with Nut Brown salted caramel ice cream, cashew brittle and pomegranate coulis. Diners and culinary judges alike cast their votes through the new "Competition Dining" voting app, available on Apple and Android mobile devices, which allowed them to rate each dish as it was presented. Diners and judges without smartphones filled out voting ballots during dinner.