

Five Finalists Named for "2008 Maine Lobster Chef of the Year" Cook-off

7/9/2008

Cook-off event to be held July 22nd at Maine Governor's Residence

Augusta, ME – Five finalists have been selected for the newly re-launched “2008 Maine Lobster Chef of the Year” cook-off, to be held July 22nd from 4-6 pm. The festive competition will take place at Blaine House, the Governor's residence, located on State Street in Augusta. Press is invited to attend and meet the five finalists, sample their tasty lobster contest entries, and meet Governor and First Lady Baldacci, who are graciously hosting the event to support the Maine Lobster industry.

The five finalists each will prepare and present their dishes before a panel of judges at the July 22nd cook-off. Dane Somers, Executive Director of the Maine Lobster Promotion Council and Merrill Williams, Editor and Publisher of Maine Food & Lifestyle magazine (www.mainefoodandlifestyle.com), also will be speaking at the event.

“Maine Lobster has always played an important role in our state's heritage and economy. Maine's lobstermen have recognized that sustainable harvesting is vital to maintaining the industry,” said Governor Baldacci. “I look forward to this year's cook-off event for the opportunity to celebrate our lobster heritage.”

The Maine Lobster Promotion Council and Maine Food & Lifestyle magazine, co-sponsors of the 2008 cook-off event, earlier today announced this year's finalists: **Lawrence Kiang**, Chef de Cuisine at Natalie's Camden Harbour Inn in Camden; **Pete Murphy**, Executive Chef at Boothbay Harbor's Historic Russell House Restaurant and Tavern; **Zeph Belanger**, of Camden's Hartstone Inn; **Margaret McLellan**, Corporate Chef of Native Maine Produce and Shucks Lobster in Richmond; and, **Joshua Clark**, Chef de Cuisine at Camden's Atlantica Restaurant.

This year's competition generated a record number of Maine Lobster recipes from culinary professionals all over the state. “We were all thrilled by the great recipes we received from so many Mainers this year, and are so glad to be able to relaunch this festive event,” according to Somers. “The competition was really impressive, and that speaks volumes for the high regard that so many chefs and their customers have for Maine Lobster.”

For this year's “Maine Lobster Chef of the Year” cook-off, MLPC and Maine Food & Lifestyle have decided on a fun cook-off format with prizes to be awarded for “Best Overall,” as well as for 1st and 2nd runners-up. The “Maine Lobster Chef of the Year” title will go to this year's winner of the “Best Overall” category.

Judges at the cook-off event will score the finalists' dishes based on presentation, flavor, taste and texture. Additionally, event attendees, who also will enjoy sampling all of the finalists' dishes, will be able to cast their votes for their favorite dish to determine the “People's Choice” winner.

“Pairing such a popular, premium food item like Maine Lobster with such an interesting mix of culinary talent should make this year's cook-off event a big draw,” noted Williams. “The cook-off highlights in such a great way the very diverse ways in which Maine Lobster can be prepared and served, and it looks like judges will have some pretty tough decisions to make on event day.”