

KELOWNA

What's in the black box?

Chefs vie in three competitions to become Canadian Culinary Champion

By STEVE MacNAULL
The Okanagan Sunday

Chef Duncan Ly opened up his black box of ingredients and thought: Oh no.

"Two of the ingredients were smoked wild boar shank and licorice root," said the chef from Raw Bar in the Hotel Arts in Calgary.

"Those are two difficult things to work with."

But as a competitor in the Canadian Culinary Championships being held in Kelowna this weekend, Ly got to work and made the best of what is called The Black Box.

What's in the box is a secret until chefs open them and then have one hour to make two spectacular plates out of what's inside.

The eight chefs who qualified in competitions across the country to compete at the Kelowna finals all had the same black box of ingredients.

Each had a sous chef to help at a work station in the culinary school of Okanagan College's Kelowna campus to get it done.

"I would have liked 40 more minutes," said Ly.

"But I was pretty happy with what I turned out in an hour."

Which was, braised wild boar shank with fondant potatoes in a smoked boar broth for the first dish and sauteed crab with licorice hollandaise sauce and a fresh Asian pear and



STEVE MacNAULL/The Okanagan Sunday

Chef Duncan Ly of Raw Bar in the Hotel Arts in Calgary was one of eight chefs vying for the Canadian Culinary Championship Saturday night at the Delta Grand hotel in Kelowna.

coriander salad.

"It sounds complicated and sometimes the cooking techniques are," said Ly.

"But the goal is to always produce a dish that tastes good because the flavours are simple and the texture is right."

To be crowned Canadian

Culinary Champion, the winning chef had to excel in three competitions to rack up points.

On Friday night the mystery wine pairing event at the Hotel Eldorado had Ly presented with a red wine that he thought was a Bordeaux blend, so he whipped up some crispy-skinned chicken

thighs to go with it.

During the day on Saturday, The Black Box was held at the college and Saturday night's Grand Finale at the Delta Grand hotel saw hundreds of people turn out to sample dishes from each of the eight finalist chefs paired with wine from a Canadian winery.

There was also dessert and a Jim Cuddy concert.

Ly matched the 2009 riesling from Kelowna's Tantalus Winery with salmon, duck confit and beets.

The winner wasn't announced until after press time Saturday night.