

Burger, fries and a shake



STEVE MacNAULL/The Okanagan Saturday

Luke McGrath from the Hotel Eldorado in Kelowna won The Young Chefs Competition held this week at Okanagan College's Kelowna campus as part of the Fall Okanagan Wine Festival.

By STEVE MacNAULL
The Okanagan Saturday
Oct 11 CI

Luke McGrath's riff on the traditional hamburger with French fries and a milkshake made him a winner.

McGrath, a chef at Hotel Eldorado in Kelowna, whipped up a modern version of the Americana comfort food using rabbit meat on a focaccia slider bun for the burger, deep-fried gouda cheese and chickpeas in the shape of fries, and a shake made of goat-cheese ice cream and figs in a little chocolate cup.

The innovative lineup impressed and McGrath beat out nine other rivals to win The Young Chefs Competition this week at the Okanagan College campus in Kelowna.

The annual event is part of the Fall Okanagan Wine Festival, so, of course, this food had to be matched with Valley vintages.

Thus, the inspired pairing of rabbit slider with the 2013 roussanne-viognier from Summerland's Silkscarf Winery.

If you're the kind of person who simply has to have red wine with rabbit, then Silkscarf was also pouring its ruby-coloured 2008 Ensemble blend.

McGrath was the unanimous choice of the three judges who wandered about eating 14 plates of food with wine matches.

The judges were myself, Metro Liquor wine expert Jim Martin and Carolyn Nixon, formerly of the Hotel Eldorado and now working on a new brew-pub concept for downtown Kelowna.

The premise of The Young Chefs Competition is to showcase the talents of relatively new staff at Valley restaurants.

The event is sponsored by Alexis de Portneuf Fine Cheese Makers, so the only stipulation on the food is that it be made using at least one of the many cheeses provided.

The sell-out crowd of 150 in attendance had only to wander around and enjoy themselves nibbling, sipping and voting for their favourites.

The public chose the apprentice team led by Okanagan College culinary instructor Jim Armstrong as the People's Choice winner.

The team served a brown sugar-cured duck breast with fig and goat cheese, paired with 2012 pinot noir from Misconduct Wine in Naramata.

The top apprentice team was the one led by instructor Reinhard Foerderer for its grilled haloumi cheese and pesto on focaccia bread.

The Fall Okanagan Wine Festival wraps up this weekend.

But, there's still a myriad of events to take in.

The flagship Valley First Grand Finale Consumer Tasting is tonight at the Penticton Trade and Convention Centre.

Today and tomorrow, there are also lots of wine-and-food-pairing brunches, lunches and dinners; tastings at wineries; and special events.

For a full list, pick up a fall fest guide at any winery, hotel or tourist information centre or check out thewinefestivals.com.



STEVE MACNAULL/The Okanagan Saturday

The group led by Okanagan College culinary instructor Reinhard Foerderer, centre, won the best apprentice team prize. They are, from left, Holly Sirr, Patti Deboer, Ashley Elko and Skye Newton.