

Chefs battle in culinary fundraiser

An hour to harvest, cook and present

BY SUSAN SCHWARTZ, THE GAZETTE SEPTEMBER 3, 2013



Gazette reporter Susan Schwartz, seen here sampling an entry at the 2012 competition, will be a judge at the fourth annual Santropol Roulant Iron Chef-type battle on Sept. 12, where participants pledge to raise at least \$500 to support the organization's Urban Agriculture Program.

Photograph by: Dario Ayala, Gazette files

Organizers have dubbed the event the Battle of the Beets.

Santropol Roulant's fourth annual Iron Chef Competition, a fundraiser in support of the community organization's Urban Agriculture Program, this year involves chefs from five Montreal restaurants: Crudessence, Fabergé, Laïka, Panthère Verte and Rumi. Each has committed to raising a minimum of \$500 for the program.

The event, which is open to the public, takes place Sept. 12, starting at 5 p.m., at the Edible Campus Garden on McGill University's lower campus; it's just east of the Roddick gates next to Burnside Hall.

The members of each team will have just one hour to harvest vegetables and herbs from the garden, which is bursting with produce this time of year, and, using mostly what is harvested, to prepare a dish that showcases their culinary sensibilities and creativity.

Participants are to be judged on factors including taste, presentation, portion size (the dish is

intended as a single serving) and creativity.

CHOM-FM radio personality Terry DiMonte, Amie Watson of Midnight Poutine (midnightpoutine.ca), Carole Thibaudeau of La Presse, cooking teacher MariÈve Savaria of the Brutalimentation blog (brutalimentation.ca) and I are the judges. I have judged this competition before — and think it's a fine opportunity to observe grace under pressure as the chefs work and also to witness food going from garden to plate in the space of an hour.

Each team works at a station equipped with only rudimentary materials: a two single-burner propane-powered hot plate, a pot and a frying pan, a couple of knives, a spatula, wooden spoon, mixing bowl and oil, salt and pepper. Each team is permitted to bring one “special” ingredient — a product that represents their signature style and flavour.

Last year's event drew about 150 supporters, including young families and food types photographing the dishes in progress and peppering the busy chefs with questions.

The competition will be followed by refreshments and performances by vocalist Erika Souci and the Montreal folk band Heirloom.

The support of the McAuslan Brewery means that there will be beer for sale.

The garden is one of several programs of Santropol Roulant, a Plateau Mont-Royal community organization that, with the help of thousands of volunteers, has prepared and delivered more than 465,000 meals over the past 18 years to Montrealers, mainly older Montrealers, whose autonomy is diminished.

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Husayn Friedmann, co-owner of Rumi, chops celery, with Swiss chard and pepper before him, during last year's Iron Chef Competition organized by Santropol Roulant. The Rumi team won the award for best team spirit.

Photograph by: Dario Ayala, Gazette files

