

PRESS RELEASE

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Six Aspiring Chefs Compete at the 2019 United States of Umami Culinary Competition Sponsored by Ajinomoto Co. and Umami Information Center

Winners showcase the power of umami in driving deliciousness

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – November 19, 2019 – Ajinomoto Co., the global experts in the taste sensation umami, sponsored the 2019 United States of Umami Culinary Competition on November 8, 2019, in conjunction with the Umami Information Center. Finalists from six culinary schools came together in Charleston, South Carolina to prepare their umami-rich recipes side-by-side at The Culinary Institute of Charleston at Trident Technical College where they were judged by a panel of chef experts

Each competitor was required to incorporate umami in multiple formats to create two competition-worthy dishes, one exclusively plant-based and one that represented their locale in the United States or cultural heritage. Final dishes included a delicious array of ideas from braised pork shanks to beet and barley risotto to blackened bass.

The winning dishes – glazed duck with burnt onion and persimmon jam and roasted spaghetti squash with charred eggplant and miso puree – were developed by Amanda Lee, representing the Institute of Culinary Education in New York City. Lee’s glazed duck dish was inspired by her Chinese father and Korean mother: “Duck feels like a special occasion treat to me,” explained Lee, “so what better way to celebrate this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity?” Lee was awarded a trip to Japan for a culinary adventure throughout the country.

The second-place winner was Suk Son Weisman (International Culinary Center, New York City), for her two dishes of Asian pear salad with umami dressing and autumn umami steak with radish puree. The third-place winner was Irene Yllanes (Miami Culinary Institute, Miami, Florida), for her two dishes of snapper and kimchi causa with miso huancaína and king trumpet mushroom anticucho with comte pao de queijo. As prizes, both received high-end, professional chef knives. Other finalists included Sam Farley (Johnson & Wales University, Providence, Rhode Island), Michael Gavin (Nicholls State University, Thibodaux, Louisiana), and Nick Petorak (Johnson & Wales University Charlotte, North Carolina). Chef judges included Ed Brown, President of Restaurant Associates; Ron Hsu, Partner and Executive Chef of Lazy Betty in Atlanta, GA; Kevin Johnson, Executive Chef and Owner, The Grocery in Charleston, SC; Hilda Loubster, Certified Executive Chef, Worldchefs level 2 judge; and Donald Miller, recently retired Senior Executive Chef of University of Notre Dame.

The competition was organized and sponsored by Ajinomoto Co. and the Umami Information Center, both experts in umami. The goal of the competition is to foster a correct understanding of umami among students in culinary schools, so that future chefs will be able to properly use umami to transform recipes into healthy, delicious and sustainable dishes.

About Ajinomoto Group

The Ajinomoto Group is a global company with specialties in the business of food and amino acids, guided by our leading-edge bioscience and fine chemical technologies. Based on the corporate message “Eat Well, Live Well.”, we have been scientifically pursuing the possibilities of amino acids in supporting the healthy lives of people all around the world. We aim for future growth and continuous contribution to greater wellness by creating value through sustainable and innovative solutions for communities and society. The Ajinomoto Group has offices in 35 countries and regions and sells products in more than 130 countries and regions. To learn more, visit www.ajinomoto.com.

About Umami Information Center

Founded in 1982, the Umami Information Center (UIC) is an international non-profit organization accredited by Tokyo Metropolitan Governor’s Office. By providing accurate and beneficial information on umami to researchers, chefs, culinary professionals, culinary students, dietitians, food journalists and general publics, the UIC desires to promote the healthy and pleasant eating, and improve the quality of life. Therefore, UIC dedicates itself to the education about umami, the organization of symposia, the maintenance of a comprehensive website in which concentration of umami compounds in more than 800 food ingredients are shown, and sharing the latest information through facebook and instagram in English, Spanish and Japanese. For more information, please visit www.umamiinfo.com.