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PRESS RELEASE

TUCSON *meet*
YOURSELF
a folklife festival

DOWNTOWN

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2011 TUCSON MEET YOURSELF IRON CHEF PRESS RELEASE

Tucson, AZ—Tucson Meet Yourself Iron Chef draws in the crowds and heats up the competition, in the hopes of showcasing whose culinary skills reign supreme.

Originally founded by Dr. James Griffith a University of Arizona folklorist and anthropologist, Tucson Meet Yourself has been a Pima County tradition since 1974. Bringing together the community through different ethnic food vendors, artists and cultural festivities, TMY gathers Tucsonans for a family friendly weekend.

Having such immense popularity throughout the years TMY has been expanding offering the community more booths, live music, free entertainment and shows.

Starting in the fall of 2008 at the TMY festival, under the leadership of Mia Hansen, TMY coordinator, The Healthy Ethnic Iron Chef was established by Elizabeth Mikesell, former chair for the Chef and Child to focus on childhood nutrition awareness to celebrate the American Culinary Federation Chef and Child's annual childhood nutrition day on October 16th. Inspired by the popular Food Network show "Iron Chef America", the festival version focuses on high school and college students using the same concept with the secret ingredient to prepare nutritious, delicious and beautiful food for the judges to evaluate. The feature event brings in the professionals to compete more on the same level and format as the television series.

This past weekend the rivalry began with different high school and college culinary arts students competing for the title of best cuisine. Mimicking "Iron Chef America", TMY Iron Chef also incorporates a secret ingredient and a set time line to cook. Unlike the Food Network version, Tucson's Kitchen stadium also featured a theme, ranging from Asian, Italian to Latino cuisine.

Kitchen Stadium was fully equipped with state of art commercial grade appliances and tools, provided by Rational and Arizona Restaurant Supply.

Culinary students from the Tucson Art Institute and Pima college also helped support TMY Iron Chef, making sure things ran smoothly by working as the back of the house crew.

Launching on Friday Oct. 14, everyone brought their best skills to the table to fight for Iron Chef Champion. Two rounds of high school competitions were held, beginning with an Asian themed cuisine featuring JTED Santa Rita against Canyon Del Oro High School. CDO was thrown back in the ring along with JTED Santa Rita High school again, this time with an Italian themed cuisine. In both competitions CDO culinary took the title of Teen Iron Chef.

Later that night, things really heated up with the Professional Women Chefs Showdown. Executive Chef Tamara Stempel from Oro Valley Country club went up against Executive Chef / Owner Maria Mezon of BOCA restaurant. While competition was close, in the end Chef Maria took the title of Women's Iron Chef for 2011.

On Saturday, another round of the student competition was held between what was to have been two more high school teams, Ironwood Ridge and Mountain View. Because Mountain View had to withdraw at the last minute, Pima College pulled an emergency team together. The theme was Asian cuisine. Ironwood Ridge made beautiful food but were late getting the judges plates out so Pima won that round. Another round followed with two college teams both from Pima Community College. In this battle each team presented exquisite and visually pleasing Latino dishes. Team A beat team B in this round.

The best of Eastern culture and Western cuisine was exhibited by Master Chef Bill Sy, a native from China and Master Chef Walter Leible, a native from Germany. Both are the academic directors for the Art Institute, Sy working in Tucson and Leible working in Phoenix. Their performance was unlike any other featuring their spectacular culinary skills and highlighting their humorous camaraderie.

The main event was held Saturday night featuring the professional Men's Iron Chef Competition. This showdown brought 2010 Iron Chef Winner Ryan Clark from Desert on the Lodge and Acacia Executive Chef / Owner Albert Hall. Using elaborate culinary techniques by incorporating molecular gastronomy into their artistic creations, these two chefs impressed the crowd. Losing by less than a point, Chef Ryan lost his title and a new Iron Chef Tucson was bestowed upon Chef Albert Hall.

Ending the weekend at TMY Kitchen Stadium, the junior competitions continued with Marana vs. Sahuarita High School preparing Latino cuisine. The first round winner went to Sahuarita High School. Last but not least Catalina went up against Marana High preparing Italian cuisine for the final round of competition. Both teams produced phenomenal menus beautifully executed. Catalina was the winner of that event ending out the weekend on a high note.

Judges for the event included Janet Taylor, who is an expert on nutrition and has written 3 nutrition specific cookbooks, chef Adam Buzzalini of Maynard's, chef Jesse Bright of Sol casinos, chef Barry Infuso of Pima College, chef Shayne Spradlin of Canyon Ranch health spa, Dr. Dolores Rivas Bahti of the University of Arizona, Chef Alan Zeman, regional chef for Rational, chef Elizabeth Mikesell of Pima college, chef Tavel Bristol, corporate chef for Hacienda del Sol, chef Aris Cabrera of the Doubletree hotel, chef Ellen Fenster of Chantilly tea room, Chef John Wirtis of Caridad community school, chef Jan Osipowicz of the Hilton El Conquistador resort, chef Ramon Delgado of Desert Diamond casinos, chef Tori Christie current consultant, chef Todd Eanes of the Art Institute, Chef David Sullivan of the Art Institute and chef Anna of the Art Institute. Emcees were led by chef Mario Diaz de Sandy with local television personality Jessica Chapin on Saturday afternoon and chefs association manager Jeanie Merideth on Friday evening and Gina Marie on Saturday.

For those who wanted to sample the chefs dishes, tickets were offered for only \$10-20 per person. All proceeds benefited the American Culinary Federation Chef and Child Foundation to further childhood nutrition and obesity education and awareness to further Michelle Obama's "Let's Move" campaign and Careers through Culinary Arts Program, both non-profit organizations. C-CAP has become famous for providing under privileged high school students, scholarship opportunities to continue their career in the culinary industry.

In the end the audience members were the real winners, being able to purchase VIP seats at the chef's table and dine front row, getting to see the action unfold.