



GOOD FOOD – Fry bread on a stick is one of the tasty offerings from Grand Ronde's Spirit Mountain Casino team. Visitors to the event were treated to various versions of smoked salmon, baked salmon, dried elk, fried eel, venison, duck and even buffalo sliders.

After Retasket and the staff finished counting the votes, Robertson announced the People's Choice Award winner – Chinook Winds Casino. The Siletz Tribe's Chinook Winds Casino team was Brenda Friedrich, Douglas Brown and Geno Standfill.

Chef Brenda Friedrich was born in Lafayette, Ind., and moved to Hillsboro, Ore., with her family in 1969. After graduating from Hillsboro High School, she began cooking at age 19.

While raising a family, Friedrich completed her education through the American Culinary Federation while taking classes in management and nutrition. She has worked at Chinook Winds Casino Resort since 2003.

Chef Friedrich, who credits her grandmother with being her inspiration and her teacher, is very active in local competitions and promotional events like the annual Oyster Cloister and Chowder Cook-Off.

Siletz Tribal member Douglas Brown helped the Chinook Winds Casino team win the inaugural People's Choice Award. He is the son of Siletz Tribal Elder Bennie Brown and Tribal Elder MaryAnn Butler Brown.

Brown, who was born in Newport, Ore., in July 1942, remembers his first job being like lots of other Native kids – working in the fields picking beans and berries at local Siletz-area farms. He received a degree from Portland Community College as a dinner cook after earning a GED.

Brown worked at the Timbers restaurant in Toledo for 13 years and he has been at Chinook Winds Casino for more than 10 years now.

Brown, who has never married and has no children, has been nominated for the Superstar Award (quarterly outstanding casino employee award) several times since working at the casino. He plans to retire in two years and will be missed by his fellow Chinook Winds staff members and management personnel because of his outstanding work record.

Cherokee Tribal member Eugene "Geno" Standfill was born in Oakridge, Ore., in November 1953 and after earning his GED attended Eugene's Lane Community College and Culinary School.

Standfill is a Navy Veteran with an E3 rank who has worked at Chinook Winds for the last three years as part of the casino management team.

Rez Kitchen Tour organizers were pleased with the well-promoted event

and very happy with the large turnout of visitors who sampled the chefs' offerings and voted for the winners.

"We were pleased that eight of the nine Oregon Tribal casinos had teams at the event," said Retasket, event organizer. "All nine of the Tribes were represented because the Burns-Paiute Tribe had a Tribal Council member here participating."

Retasket said the large turnout and spirited participation has led to talk of the event continuing next year – possibly at another Tribal casino in the state.

"It is our hope that the event will rotate around the state to the Tribal casinos that are interested in hosting the event," said Retasket. "We want to bring attention to the state's culinary talent and promote buy Oregon and buy Oregon Tribal products. This year focused on traditional foods and we saw many different versions of salmon, elk, deer and many seafoods and berries."

Retasket and Tovey said the goal of the event was to bring Tribal people together and create this network of traditional foods chefs and vendors and promote the whole spectrum of Native American cuisine to the masses one local event at a time.

Tribal member vendors at the Rez Kitchen Tour event were Umpqua Indian Foods, Coquille Cranberries, Old Coyote Winery and Wolf Song Fisheries.

"We here at the Siletz Tribal Business Corporation are proud to be the catalyst for an opportunity to make meaningful connections between our Tribal food outlets and the people that harvest the foods with the hope that those bonds will continue to grow," said Tovey. "While creation of recognized Northwest or Oregon Tribal cuisine is important for our hospitality assets. The idea of sharing our foods and ways of preparation among our great Oregon Tribal nations is fundamental to how our Tribes have always interacted."

One of the unique aspects of the event was a roundtable discussion between Tribal vendors, casino food and beverage staff, members of the Oregon Tribal Tourism Work Group among others that was facilitated by Anne Berblinger.

Retasket said the focus of the discussions boiled down to different ways to increase buying from Tribal businesses or Tribal member-owned businesses.

CHEF JACK – One of the highlights of the Rez Kitchen Tour event is the appearance of well-known Siletz Tribal member Chef Jack Strong. Strong gave a demonstration, signed books, acted as a guest judge and visited with folks throughout the event. Chef Strong is currently the chef de cuisine at the Salish Lodge and Spa in Snoqualmie, Wash. Look for an upcoming Tribal member feature on Strong in the January issue of Siletz News.



Photos by Brent Merrill

"One of the suggestions for development was a Native American gift basket containing Tribal products from several different Tribal entities," explained Retasket. She also pointed out that one of the highlights of this year's event was the appearance of Siletz Tribal member Chef Jack Strong.

Strong, who is from Siletz, is currently the Chef de Cuisine at the Salish Lodge and Spa in Snoqualmie, Wash., and started the public event with a demonstration on the main stage at 11 a.m.

Chef Strong has 20 years of experience in the culinary arts and said that his Native American heritage plays a big role in his culinary philosophy that features farm-fresh, indigenous herbs and incorporating obvious Northwest ingredients into his traditional menu items.

Strong, who graduated from the culinary program at Lane Community College, was nominated for the Best Chef: Southwest Award in 2008 – the award is part of the James Beard Award long list.

Chef Strong also is featured as a co-author of the newly released book, *The New Native American Cuisine: Five Star Recipes from the Chefs of Arizona's Kai Restaurant*.

Strong previously held the position of chef de cuisine at the Kai Restaurant at the Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Resort and Spa in Phoenix, Ariz. Prior to his service at Kai, he was the sous chef at The Phoenician's Windows on the Green in Scottsdale, Ariz.

Besides his cooking demonstration and presentation, Strong signed copies of his book for folks and served as a guest judge for the Rez Kitchen Tour event awards.

The other two guest judges at the event were Umatilla Tribal member Clifford Shippentower and Lincoln City restaurateur Chef Rob Pounding.

Shippentower, the owner of Wolf Song Fisheries which harvests and retails traditional foods, is a Native salmon fisherman and businessman with 30 years of experience in the fishing industry. He joined forces with his wife, Sam, and started Wolf Song Fisheries – with a fleet of three treaty fishing vessels now – in 1989.

Together, they specialize in Columbia River salmon products like canned smoked salmon and prepackaged, vacuum-packed dried salmon portions sold wholesale and retail in Washington and Oregon. The Shippentowers explained

that they also sell more than dried, smoked and fresh fish – they also vend the huckleberries they harvest at the base of Mount Adams in jam.

Chef Pounding is renowned throughout the Northwest and beyond as the owner and head chef of Lincoln City's own five-star restaurant, the Blackfish Cafe. Pounding was selected as one of the top 10 chefs in the Northwest by NorthWest Magazine and was also selected as the first-ever Captain of the Northwest Culinary Olympics. His team won 15 medals in the competition and he won personal gold, silver and bronze medals for hot and cold food preparation and for using foods native to the Northwest.

Chef Pounding also has earned medals in high-level competitions in Canada, Asia, Europe and throughout the Americas and served as a guest chef at the Hotel Furama in Central Hong Kong. He also has served as a guest chef at the U.S. Embassy in Hong Kong and participated in a unique chef exchange that took him to France. In France, Pounding served as chef at the Hotel Fregate in Bandol.

Chef Pounding was recently honored by being selected to teach American Cuisine at the Tsuji School for Culinary Arts in Osaka, Japan, and the Japanese Hotel Institute in Fukuoka, Japan.

Pounding is a graduate of the Culinary Institute of America, he is a certified executive chef and a member of the Academy of Chefs, the American Culinary Federation's Honour Society for Excellence in Culinary Arts.

The sponsors of this year's event were Spirit Mountain Community Fund, Chinook Winds Casino Resort, the Siletz Tribal Business Corporation, the Indian Land Tenure Foundation, Pepsi, Salish Lodge & Spa, Blackfish Cafe, Wolf Song Fisheries, Vicor, Eco-Flame, All-Ways Traveling, Oregon Native American Business & Entrepreneurial Network (ONABEN), Travel Oregon and the Columbia River InterTribal Fish Commission.

Although the location of next year's second annual Rez Kitchen Tour has yet to be determined, one thing is already set in stone – samplers at future events will be treated to some of the best-tasting, most creatively prepared, traditional Native American food items ever offered to the public in what amounts to the last unexplored food category left in the culture of American cuisine.