

THE BEST OF THE BEST

Ring of Fire

BEST CHEF: Porn Wa Dee Gamer

Why do you deserve the Best Chef award? I do the best I can with my food. I've been cooking for 40 years, and I can do anything that the customers tell me to do. My food comes with my heart, and I like my job. *If you were an animal or vegetable, what would you be and why?* An elephant because they are big animals and live in the wild.

BEST BARTENDER: Don Mike

Do you think you really deserve to win? Honestly, I go around town to every bar, and I know about every bartender. Personally, I voted for Albert over at Soriah's. He's an awesome bartender as well. I'm a hard worker. I try to be really efficient. I strive for excellence in my service. *What's your worst behind the bar disaster?* Two broken glasses by customers right over the ice-well during a rush — right in the ice. It slowed up everything for like 15 minutes. *Did you get a good tip?* Honestly no, they just got up and left. They were embarrassed. I got robbed. I didn't say anything, but by the look on my face ... *What's the most bizarre bar story you've got?* Honestly, we have bachelorette parties in here that get pretty wild sometimes. I've seen tops come off in here. It's Eugene, a lot of things can happen. Like people passing naked-guy cards around to everyone.

BEST PACIFIC RIM

EW talked to Josh, the owner: *Do you really deserve to win?* Yes. Because we love what we do. The flavors are so distinct and when you put a few different dishes on your plate and eat them together it brings out really intense flavor combinations. *What was your worst kitchen disaster?* One time the fire suppression system inside the hood of the stove went off in the middle of dinner. It sprays white powder everywhere, and it just went off randomly. We had to close the restaurant and tell everyone we were sorry we couldn't serve them their food.



Porn Wa Dee Gamer - BEST CHEF

JAMES BATEMAN

Chao Pra Ya

BEST TAKEOUT BEST SOUTHEAST ASIAN

EW talked to Vivat Kaokept, the owner: *Do you think you really deserve to win?* We serve good food. Good service. *What was your worst kitchen disaster?* The curry is sometimes too spicy, and we get complaints from customers. Of course, some customers don't understand Thai style. A real hot Thai style is real mean spicy. I have to tell my waitress to mention to customers, the spicy in our restaurant is really Thai-style spicy.

Kitty Piercy

BEST POLITICAL COUP BEST ELECTED OFFICIAL

Do you think you really deserve to win? Gosh. I just want to say that I'm honored that people would think I deserve this. There are a lot of people who could also have been chosen, and I'll just say thanks and be glad that people think of me in this light. In running for this position and what I face in the future, I just want to make it clear that this is me and hundreds of other Oregonians working together to try to build a better future for our community. *Tell us something only your close friends know about you.* I guess what people might not know about me is the years I struggled to be able to be comfortable speaking in public. I was just a pretty shy person, and I probably spent seven years with my knees knocking and my voice trembling, thinking I would never be able to speak in front of people.

Home

BEST PLACE TO FIND TRUE LOVE BEST PLACE TO WORK

We're not sure what this says about our society these days but maybe Eugeneans are just homebodies. Then again there's a lot to be said for getting smooches over morning coffee, then wandering over to the computer to start the day's work in your jammies and slippers.



Don Mike - BEST BARTENDER

TODD COOPER



Kitty Piercy
BEST POLITICAL COUP
BEST ELECTED OFFICIAL

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Soriah

BEST MIDDLE EASTERN

EW talked to Ibrahim Hamide, the owner: *Do you think you really deserve to win?* Well, I'm the father of Middle Eastern food in town. I think I almost introduced it in Eugene and have been doing it for more than 25 years. I'm from Palestine. It's my home-cooking, what I grew up with and I don't know anybody who does it better. *Worst kitchen disaster?* We had someone switch the salt and sugar container once so all our food was sweet. Years ago I set the Eugene Hotel on fire. I do tableside flambées and the booze bottle caught on fire and shot out flaming liquid across the room. It got a few people and the floor to ceiling French drapes. Fortunately there were no injuries. That was literally 35 years ago, and I've been a good boy ever since.

BEST PLACE FOR A FIRST DATE

Remember: the first date can be make-or-break, so you gotta do it right. And what's more tried-and-true than dinner and a movie? Especially if dinner is at Café Soriah, *EW* readers' favorite romantic restaurant. The Soriah chefs make the best *fattoush* in town, and the bartenders mix up *mojitos* that'll make your head swim! Once you and your crush are well fed and maybe a little tipsy, you can head down the street to our readers' second-favorite first-date location: the Bijou, Eugene's only independent movie theater. Maybe you can play a little footsie while the film rolls.

Burrito Boy

BEST CHEAP EATS BEST BURRITO

EW talked to John Ramirez the owner: *Why does Burrito Boy deserve to win?* Because I think that we are the best. Our food is cooked fresh — I even have noticed that vegetarians are coming back to our place for the flavor of the vegetable burritos because we stay on top of that freshness. I like making good food — a cook has to love what they do.



Ibrahim Hamide, owner of Soriah -
BEST MIDDLE EASTERN
BEST PLACE FOR A FIRST DATE

JAMES BATEMAN