

# Top Chefs, Food Network star help sell-out Wilmington brunch

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The stage was set Sunday at the DuPont Country Club for some smack talk. And one of the recent contestants on the Bravo reality TV culinary show "Top Chef" didn't disappoint.

At the Celebrity Chefs' Brunch, Meals on Wheels Delaware's annual fundraiser, Los Angeles Chef Katsuji Tanabe was situated at a table across from his arch nemesis John Tesar, a Dallas chef who also appeared on the recent "Top Chef: Charleston" season.

Long lines formed at both cooking stations at the Rockland country club as guests waited to chat, take photos and eat food made by Tanabe and Tesar.

As Tesar plated up scrambled eggs sprinkled with truffles and served with thick slices of Iberico bacon, Tanabe assembled Kobe beef tongue tacos layered with a deeply-flavored almond mole sauce that had just enough heat to make noses run.

Tanabe, who owns a Mexican-Kosher restaurant in California and wore a jacket with the words "I Hate

Vegans" stitched on his sleeve, wasn't much impressed with Tesar's offering. Hearing him needle Tesar was just like an episode of "Top Chef," only this was live. In real life.

"Anyone can make scrambled eggs," Tanabe said, and then began explaining the various components of his dish, which, truth be told, was one of the best-tasting bites of the day.

Tesar, who appeared in a great mood, wasn't going to let anyone, let alone Tanabe, ruin his day.

"I love this event," he said with a huge smile, as he put finishing touches on each plate of his own dish which seemed equally well-received.

The Celebrity Chefs' Brunch, featuring nearly 30 local and national chefs, celebrated its 20th anniversary with a sold-out crowd of more than 1,000 people.

A long, snaking queue formed outside of the DuPont Country Club well before the 11:30 a.m. start. It was a new location for the event, hosted by Food Network star Anne Burrell, that had previously been held at sites in

See BRUNCH, Page 2D



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Celebrity chef John Tesar prepares his dish, scrambled eggs sprinkled with truffles and served with thick slices of Iberico bacon, at the 20th Annual Celebrity Chefs' Brunch held at the DuPont Country Club in Wilmington on Sunday afternoon.

# Brunch

Continued from Page 1D

the city of Wilmington.

As rooms filled with hungry, thirsty guests and chefs began cooking, the heat began to rise and it wasn't long before the elbow-to-elbow spaces felt cramped. It was easy to miss the vast openness of the Hercules Building atrium, where the event was held last year.

Because of the large crowd, finding such dishes as shrimp, sausage and tasso gravy over creamy white grits from Chef Donald Drake of Magnolias in Charleston, South Carolina, took some work. But those who found Drake were treated to his Southern charm and good-humor.

He and his cooking partner, both sporting bow ties, showed off spiffy pink Converse sneakers after handing out their dishes.

Seafood sparkled on many plates. Oregon chef Paul Bachand made beet-cured salmon, while Dave Banks of Harry's Hospitality Group had langoustino sausage, Mark Levy of Baltimore offered octopus bruschetta and Dewey Beach's Peter McMahon presented Thai-crusted sea scallops.

Pat Bradley of Wilmington's Tonic Bar & Grille handed out plates of lobster crepes and Anthony Marini of Philadelphia's Rarest made spicy tuna tartare. Chef Brandon Foster of Denver and Jef-

frey Oska, owner of two Denver restaurants, each offered takes on salmon rill-ette.

Tickets for the event cost between \$75 to \$125. The fundraiser benefits Meals on Wheels Delaware, a non-profit organization which served 727,418 meals to 4,093 homebound senior citizens, aged 60 and older, in 2016.

## Leo & Jimmy's Deli closes Friday

The last day to enjoy a breakfast sandwich, or any kind of sandwich, from Leo & Jimmy's Delicatessen is this Friday.

The beloved downtown Wilmington breakfast and lunch takeout shop at 728 N. Market St. is closing its doors for good. The business, in its current location since 1972, has been on various sites on Market Street for 87 years.

The landmark deli, named for founders Leo Rosenbaum and Jimmy Hackett, can trace its roots back to 1930. Rosenbaum died in 2003 and Hackett died in December 2015.

Jimmy's wife Barbara Hackett, who runs the iconic shop weekdays from 5:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., said she is selling the aging building that houses the deli, as well as an adjoining property, to The Buccini/Pollin Group. The price was not disclosed.

Hackett, 71, told The News Journal the deli, in a building dating back to the mid-to late 19th century, needs costly repairs.

The Buccini/Pollin Group, a Wilmington-based developer that owns many city



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Chef Patrick Bradley of Tonic Bar & Grille prepares his dish, lobster crepe topped with lobster mascarpone and served with a ginger carrot salad and English pea emulsion, at the 20th Annual Celebrity Chefs' Brunch held at the DuPont Country Club in Wilmington on Sunday afternoon.

properties, told The News Journal there are no immediate plans for the buildings, but the Leo & Jimmy's property will remain "some kind of food service or eatery."

"As of yet, we don't have an operator," Michael J. Hare, Buccini/Pollin's senior vice president for development, told The News Journal in late March.

Wilmington Mayor Mike Purzycki and Downtown Visions Executive Director Marty Hageman are hosting a ceremony at 2:30 p.m. Friday at the deli to say thank you and goodbye to the city business.

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