

For Immediate Release

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Local Elmhurst, New York resident wins National Recipe Contest

Baton Rouge, La. – The Louisiana Sweet Potato Commission, along with *Louisiana Cookin'* magazine, have announced the conclusion of the fourth annual Sweet Rewards Recipe Contest for Canned Sweet Potatoes, naming five first-place winning recipes and one grand-prize winner.

Akihiro Moroto, from Elmhurst, New York, won first place in the Professional Category. Moroto's *Lentil and Smoked Ham Hock Soup with Sweet Potato Wontons* recipe won the category and earned the chef a \$500 cash prize.

This year, there were over 665 entries from 46 states nationwide. Entries were grouped into five categories: breads and breakfasts, soups, sides, desserts, and professional, a new category added to this year's competition for professional chefs. Twenty-six students from the Culinary Arts program at Delgado Community College in New Orleans prepared the final recipes for judging.

Judges for the contest assigned a first, second and third place winner from each category, as well as an overall grand-prize winner. The winning recipes were decided based on overall flavor, texture, visual appeal and creativity.

Louisiana Cookin' magazine featured the winners' names and recipes in its October issue and posted the winning recipes on their website. Recipes are also posted in the recipe section on the Louisiana Sweet Potato Commission's website.

The Louisiana Sweet Potato Commission is the main sponsor for the 2009 Sweet Rewards Recipe contest. Their mission is to promote the consumption of Louisiana sweet potatoes by educating consumers on the yam's many nutritional attributes and its amazing versatility in popular, delicious recipes. Bruce Foods, Allen Canning, the Culinary Arts Department at Delgado Community College and nomenu.com also sponsored this year's contest.

The next Sweet Rewards Recipe Contest for Canned Sweet Potatoes will begin in January 2009. Contest information, free recipes and nutritional information about sweet potatoes are available on the commission's website at www.sweetpotato.org.

1st Place Professional

Lentil and Smoked Ham Hock Soup with Sweet Potato Wontons

Makes 8 servings

1 1/2 cups lentils
4 ounces smoked ham hocks
10 cups chicken stock
1 1/4 cups chopped carrots, peeled, reserve peelings
2 cups chopped leeks, white part only, reserve green parts
1/2 cup finely chopped onions, in all, reserve onion peelings
3 tablespoons cloves chopped garlic, in all
2 tablespoons fresh thyme, in all
2 bay leaves, in all
6 tablespoons olive oil, in all
salt and black pepper to taste
1 cup Louisiana sweet potatoes in Light Syrup
5 ounces collard greens (use cleaned, frozen chopped greens if fresh are unavailable)
1/2 teaspoon dried crushed red pepper flakes
1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1 tablespoon cornstarch
24 wonton skins
1 egg, beaten
4 tablespoons finely chopped chives

Cover the lentils with cold water and soak for 3 to 4 hours, reserve in the refrigerator. Prepare ham hock stock by placing the hocks and chicken stock into a 1-gallon soup pot. Add the green part of the leeks and other scraps from the vegetables (onions and carrots) to add flavor, add thyme stems and 1 bay leaf. Simmer at medium low heat for 2 hours. Skim the stock of any impurities that rise to the top. The hocks should be fork tender; if not, allow the stock to simmer for a little longer. Take hocks out of pot and allow to cool. Strain the ham stock, using a fine strainer and reserve.

In a separate 1-gallon soup pot, heat 4 tablespoons of olive oil at medium heat and sweat 1/4 cup of onions and 2 tablespoons of garlic. Add the chopped leeks, carrots, 1 tablespoon of thyme and remaining bay leaf. This mixture should not have any color from the sweating process.

Drain soaked lentils, add the lentils into the soup pot, and stir the lentils and vegetable mixture just enough to mix evenly. Cover the lentils with ham hock stock and simmer at medium heat. Periodically skim the soup of impurities that may rise to the top and continue to simmer for 30 to 45 minutes or until the lentils are completely tender. Add in the collard greens to cook until tender. Remove as much of the greens as possible after 10 minutes and reserve.

Use a blender (hand held or stand up version) to puree the soup until it is smooth. Adjust seasoning of soup if necessary and keep warm.

Drain canned sweet potatoes and lightly rinse with cold water. chop into small cubes. Chop the previously cooked collard greens fine. Take the meat off of the ham hocks and chop fine. In a separate sauté pan, heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil at medium heat and sweat remaining onions and garlic, add dried red pepper flakes and cook for 1 minute. Add the collard greens, yams and ham hocks into the pan and lightly sauté. Season to taste and add the nutmeg. Turn off heat and allow to cool.

Place 24 wonton skins on a cutting board floured with cornstarch. Place 1/4 tablespoon of the potato mixture on the center of each wonton. Using a basting brush, light coat the edges of the wonton skins with beaten egg wash. Fold the wonton neatly in half, use your fingers to lightly deflate any trapped air bubbles. Continue process until all of the mixture or wontons are used.

Bring a gallon of water to boil and cook the wontons for 2 minutes. Use a skimmer to take them out. Pour 1 cup of soup into serving bowl, add 3 wontons and garnish with chopped chives.

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