



Mayor Dave Cieslewicz, one of the judges for the 2008 Dueling Chef competition, is pictured with this year's winners -- Dusty Fischer, sous chef; Charles Lazzareschi, and Lazzareschi's family, including wife Shelley and daughters Ava and Isabella.

Top chef sizzles competition at Madison Food and Wine Show

Susan Troller, Square 77

October 20, 2008

Charles Lazzareschi of the Dayton Street Grille at The Madison Concourse Hotel won the Dueling Chef competition at the 2008 Madison Food and Wine Show.

Lazzareschi, a graduate of the California Culinary Academy in San Francisco, and his sous chef, Dusty Fischer, beat rivals Andrew Lickel and sous chef Emily Smith of Samba Brazilian Grill in the final round of the competition Sunday afternoon in front of an enthusiastic crowd.

The competition involves each chef and an assistant working side by side in a double kitchen, cooking two dishes from a well-stocked pantry in just 30 minutes for a panel of judges. The chefs don't know what their main ingredient will be until just before the timer begins.

Sunday's main ingredient was an American Kobe beef flat iron steak.

Scoring is based on the flavor of each completed dish, presentation on the plate and how well the secret ingredient was used.

Lazzareschi's winning entrees included a risotto and red wine combination with fresh Brussels sprouts and late season corn off the cob with the steak as his first dish. The second plate he prepared included fingerling potatoes and chanterelle mushrooms with the steak, served with a light blue cheese cream sauce.

"I wanted the meat to speak for itself," Lazzareschi explained after the competition. "My goal was to showcase the flavor and focus on the integrity of the beef, which is very, very good. "This is really a fun thing. We're all friends, and we know each other. It's been a good year," he added.

Last summer, Lazzareschi was voted top chef in Madison Magazine's Best of Madison reader poll. The annual Food and Wine Show drew about 6,000 visitors to the Alliant Energy Center's Exhibition Hall, said Tiffany Thom, special events manager for Madison Magazine, which organizes the three-day show. The show features a broad selection of vendors of all things related to food, from representatives of the

Madison Area Technical College Culinary Arts Program to the Willy Street Co-op and from high-end kitchen designers to wineries and master cheesemakers. Thom said numbers were down slightly from last year's total of about 6,500 visitors, but there seemed to be a lot of holiday shopping going on.