



MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES
1141 Bayview Avenue, Biloxi, Mississippi 39530

News Release

Contact: Lisa Damiano Jones
Phone: 228-523-4138

09-40-LDJ
May 11, 2009

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Chef Rob Stinson to Represent Mississippi in the Sixth Annual Great American Seafood Cook-Off in New Orleans

BILOXI, Miss. – The temperature will be rising in New Orleans on July 18, 2009, as some of America's most talented chefs compete in the sixth annual Great American Seafood Cook-Off, primarily sponsored by the National Oceanic Atmospheric Association (NOAA). Noted as one of the nation's most prestigious culinary events, the Great American Seafood Cook-Off seeks out top-level chefs from across the country to compete and prepare seafood dishes using sustainable, domestic seafood and the best culinary products from their state.

Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal issued a challenge to the governors of all 50 states to send their most prized chefs to compete in the cook-off. Mississippi Gov. Haley Barbour has selected Chef Rob Stinson to represent the state in this year's Great American Seafood Cook-Off.

The Louisiana Seafood Promotion and Marketing Board will present this seafood smackdown July 18 at the Louisiana Restaurant Association's Foodservice EXPO, in conjunction with the Southwest Cargo Gulf Coast Seafood Pavilion at the New Orleans Morial Convention Center. Tickets to view the entire weekend of the cook-off can be purchased at the door. This year's master of ceremonies will be Sig Hansen from Discovery Channel's Deadliest Catch.

According to Irvin Jackson, director of Mississippi's Seafood Marketing Program under the Department of Marine Resources, "I think Chef Rob Stinson is going to go to New Orleans and prove Mississippi has what it takes to win this event. Of course, it's not all about winning, but promoting and supporting our seafood industries and giving people who love seafood, the choice of selecting the best and healthiest seafood available."

Helping organize Mississippi's participation in this year's Great American Seafood Cook-Off along with the Mississippi Seafood Marketing Program is Sarah McCullough, Cultural and Heritage Tourism Program manager with the Mississippi Development Authority. Mississippi's seafood and cuisine are a great tourism asset. Says Director of Tourism Craig Ray, "We are excited about our partnership with the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources at the Great American Seafood Cook-Off. The cook-off will enhance and showcase our culinary heritage and the important role it plays in our diverse cultural and heritage tourism product."

—MORE—

Great American Seafood Cook-Off—page 2 of 3

Chef Stinson is the owner and founder of Lookout 49 and Salute Italian Restaurant in Gulfport, Miss. He is well known along the Gulf Coast of Mississippi and is committed to serving the finest, freshest seafood in his restaurants. He is also an avid spokesperson for Wild American Shrimp, Inc. in the Chef Advocate Program, and frequently prepares dishes incorporating shrimp and other Gulf seafood on his popular television show on WLOX in Biloxi. He has also appeared with Emeril Lagasse on The Food Network promoting Gulf seafood.

Stinson has extensive education, training and experience, which includes Italian Master Chef Training, Ponza, Italy; Le Cordon Bleu, Loire, France; and a bachelor of arts from Miami University, Oxford, Ohio. His hands-on experience in the restaurant business has been with both formal and informal high-volume food and beverage operations at every level of the business. He has won several culinary competitions in the United States and abroad.

Stinson continues to be involved in the recovery efforts from Hurricane Katrina. He is personally involved in many community activities and has given tirelessly of his time and talents through donating and preparing food for the first responders immediately after Hurricane Katrina and school, civic and religious fund-raisers, and to serving as president of the Long Beach Chamber of Commerce.

The cook-off will be held July 18, and the chefs will strive to present their most sophisticated and delectable dishes. Only six finalists will move on to compete for the winning title, where mystery ingredients will be revealed and they will concentrate on making fresh domestic seafood dishes easy and exciting for home cooks. The chefs will have just a short time to make a hearty home-style meal that even the most harried home chef could prepare for the family. At the end of the day, only one chef will be crowned King or Queen of American Seafood.

Hail to the past kings: Chef John Currence of City Grocery, Oxford MS; Chef John Besh of Besh Restaurant Group, New Orleans; Chef Tim Thomas from The Ocean Forest Club, Sea Island, Ga.; Chef Justin Timineri, executive chef for the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services of Florida; and Chef Randy Evans of Brennan's Restaurant in Houston, Texas.

For more details, please visit www.GreatAmericanSeafoodCookOff.com.

The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources is dedicated to enhancing, protecting and conserving marine interests of the state by managing all marine life, public trust wetlands, adjacent uplands and waterfront areas to provide for the optimal commercial, recreational, educational and economic uses of these resources consistent with environmental concerns and social changes. Visit the DMR online at www.dmr.ms.gov .

—MORE—



Photo credit: Photo courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources

Photo cutline: Chef Rob Stinson, owner of Gulfport's Lookout 49 and Salute Italian Restaurant, will represent Mississippi in the sixth annual Great American Seafood Cook-Off to be held in New Orleans on July 18.

—END—