

SCOUT

VANCOUVER

Boulevard Chef de Partie Connor Sperling Wins \$10,000 Hawksworth Young Chef Scholarship



GOODS FROM **BOULEVARD KITCHEN & OYSTER BAR**

Vancouver, BC | The Boulevard Kitchen & Oyster Bar back-of-house brigade added yet another accolade to its already impressive resume this past weekend when Chef de Partie Connor Sperling took first place at the **2017 Hawksworth Young Chef Scholarship** culinary competition finals in Toronto.

After claiming a top spot in the regional heats that took place in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto and Montréal earlier this spring, Sperling, 26, was one of eight up-and-coming chefs from across the country who earned the right to compete in the final leg of the competition before a panel of 12 of Canada's most respected chefs and culinary critics.

The event was a black-box challenge format where finalists had three hours to incorporate seven mystery ingredients — lobster, rack of lamb, rutabaga, banana, maple syrup, buttermilk and pine mushroom — in a main course and dessert. Sperling utilized his training, passion and talent to create the winning dish of Parsley Crusted Lamb and Butter-Poached Lobster Tail, Roasted Rutabaga, Braised Kohlrabi, Farro Lobster Risotto with Lobster Foam. For the dessert course, Sperling prepared a Vanilla Grapefruit Iced Parfait with Buttermilk Emulsion, Maple Banana Purée and Raspberry Coulis.

“I can’t express enough gratitude to my Boulevard family for giving me the skills, knowledge and confidence to take on what was an incredibly talented field of fellow chefs,” said Sperling. “I could not have achieved this honour without the support and guidance of our incredible team, especially mentors like (Executive Chef) Alex Chen and (Chef de Cuisine) Roger Ma.”

Sperling, who competed against Solomon Mason (La Bussola, Kelowna), Julia Gindra (Fairmont Banff Springs, Banff), Garrett Martin (Bridgette Bar, Calgary), Andrew Lecky (Langdon Hall Country House, Cambridge, ON), Joshua Adamo (Auberge du Pommier, North York, ON), Massimo Piedimonte (Le Mousso, Montreal) and Jon Morrison (Barolo & Co., Moncton) is the fourth BC-based chef in five years to win the competition, following Paul Moran (2013), Michael Christiansen ('14) and Alex Hon ('16).

The Hawksworth Young Chef Scholarship Foundation is a culinary arts non-profit created to recognize and inspire young Canadian chefs, whilst promoting professionalism and culinary excellence within the hospitality industry. Through its national annual competition, the program provides a platform for talented young chefs to get a head start with an unparalleled opportunity to work in the country’s leading restaurants. The winner of the competition receives \$10,000 and a stage at a selected top international restaurant.

“This competition isn’t just about the food — it’s also a demonstration of the discipline it takes to perform in the kitchen,” said Ma, who made the trip to Toronto to cheer on his colleague. “We can support Connor as much as possible leading up to the competition but it was all up to him to perform under pressure, and it made us very proud to see him look so professional and shine on a national stage.”

Topping the podium in high-pressure culinary competitions is nothing new to Boulevard's back-of-house team — Chen, who led Team Canada to a top-10 finish at the renowned Bocuse d'Or in Lyon, France in 2013, set the gold standard at the 10th annual Gold Medal Plates in Victoria in 2015 and Ma won both the 2015 Vancouver Aquarium Ocean Wise Chowder Chowdown and the 2016 Curry Cup. Later this month, Chef Chen will travel to Victoria to compete in the provincial leg of the 2017 Gold Medal Plates competition with the hopes of earning the right to represent BC once again at the Canadian Culinary Championships in Kelowna, BC from February 2 to 3, 2018.