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FOOD EDITORS RELEASE

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The People Have Spoken — The Results are In “Get Wild with Wild Rice” Contest Winners

Italian Wild Rice Quesadillas and *Tuscan Beefeater’s Wild Rice Salad* won the Grand Prize and People’s Choice awards in the Minnesota Cultivated Wild Rice Council’s 2016 “*Get Wild with Wild Rice Recipe Contest*.” The contest, an annual nationwide competition, attracts participants from across the country. Imaginative, traditional, and oftentimes bizarre wild rice recipes were submitted in the categories of appetizers, soups, salads, entrées, sides, and desserts demonstrating the versatility of wild rice in your culinary creations.

Recipes went head-to-head in a taste test conducted by culinary specialists who narrowed the field to 8 finalists competing for two awards. The Grand Prize was awarded by a panel of judges headed by Chef Ken Goff and the People’s Choice Award was given to the finalist garnering the most online votes during September’s National Rice Month.

As the online competition neared the finish line, two recipes battled it out for the title of People’s Choice. With less than 3% of the vote separating *Tuscan Beefeater’s Wild Rice Salad* and *Greek Chicken & Wild Rice Tabbouleh*, the People’s Choice Award went to *Tuscan Beefeater’s Wild Rice Salad* submitted by Gilda Lester of Millsboro, DE.

Chef Ken Goff, an iconic executive chef who for decades received much media attention for his regional cuisine and later taught the next generation at Le Cordon Bleu, led a panel of judges in selecting the winning recipe. Relying on his more than 30 years of culinary experience and training, Goff and the judges ultimately chose *Italian Wild Rice Quesadillas* submitted by Jeanne Holt of Mendota Heights, MN, as the Grand Prize Winner. Goff noted the wild rice quesadillas stood out for use of sponsor products, taste, ease of preparation, and creativity, saying “It’s ‘over-the-top’ delicious.”

Grand Prize Winner – Italian Wild Rice Quesadillas (Jeanne Holt, Mendota Heights, MN)

Our Grand Prize winning recipe puts a new twist on a familiar appetizer favorite, adding both freshness and originality. *Italian Wild Rice Quesadillas* combine wild rice with tender rotisserie chicken, prosciutto ham, shredded and cream cheeses, chopped spinach and marinara sauce for a delicious “Italian” variation on this appetizer classic.

People’s Choice Winner – Tuscan Beefeater’s Wild Rice Salad (Gilda Lester, Millsboro, DE)

Our People’s Choice winning recipe features grilled and slightly spicy beef tenderloin steak atop a bed of wild rice, fresh tomatoes, green pepper and onion, garnished with blue cheese crumbles and a tangy vinaigrette dressing. *Tuscan Beefeater’s Wild Rice Salad* is a light and elegant, quick and easy, protein-rich creation serving equally well as either an entrée or a side.

(The Council’s website is home to the world’s largest online wild rice recipe library. To get the runner-up *Greek Chicken & Wild Rice Tabbouleh* recipe or any of the 2016 finalists, visit www.mnwildrice.org/search.php - “Contest Finalist” category.)

To receive your free copy of the Council's latest recipe brochure, *Minnesota Cultivated Wild Rice Recipes and Answers to Often Asked Questions*, featuring contest winning recipes and other wild rice favorites, including soups, appetizers, salads, entrées, and side dishes, send a self-addressed-stamped-envelope to: Minnesota Cultivated Wild Rice Council, Newest Recipes, 4630 Churchill St #1, St. Paul, MN 55126.

ITALIAN WILD RICE QUESADILLAS

Jeanne Holt, Mendota Heights, MN

- 4 oz Crystal Farms® Wisconsin Original Cream Cheese, softened
- 1/3 cup jarred basil pesto
- 1/3 cup chopped oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes
- 1/2 tsp red pepper flakes
- 1 box (9 oz) frozen Green Giant® Steamers Chopped Spinach, thawed and squeezed to remove moisture
- 1 cup cooked wild rice
- 2 cups Crystal Farms® Finely Shredded 6 Cheese Italian, divided
- 8 (9") flour tortillas
- 1 Gold'n Plump® Deli Fresh Rotisserie Chicken, Original Flavor, shredded
- 4 oz thinly sliced prosciutto ham, cut into thin strips
- 2 tbsp canola oil
- 2 cups jarred marinara sauce, warmed

In medium bowl, stir first 4 ingredients until mixed. Stir in spinach, wild rice, and 2/3 cup shredded cheese. Top 4 tortillas with wild rice mixture; spread evenly to within 1/4" of edges. Top with chicken and prosciutto. Sprinkle with remaining shredded cheese; top with remaining tortillas. Heat large, non-stick skillet over medium heat; brush with oil. Place quesadillas in skillet; brush tops with oil. Cook 4 minutes on each side until heated through. Keep warm in a 200°F oven. Cut into wedges. Serve with marinara. 4 servings.

TUSCAN BEEFEATER'S WILD RICE SALAD

Gilda Lester, Millsboro, DE

- 12 oz beef tenderloin steak
- 2 tbsp canola oil
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp each: pepper and red pepper flakes

Salad:

- 3/4 cup bottled Italian vinaigrette dressing
- 2 cups cooked wild rice
- 2 large tomatoes, seeded and diced
- 1 green pepper, julienned
- 3 green onions, chopped
- 1 container (4 oz) Crystal Farms® Blue Cheese Crumbles, divided

Brush steak with oil; sprinkle with salt, pepper, and red pepper flakes. Grill to internal temperature of 145°F; thinly slice. In large bowl, toss all salad ingredients, reserving 2 oz of blue cheese. Top with steak and remaining blue cheese. 4 servings.

Note to Editor:

For a high-resolution electronic copy of the photos, call or email our office.

Due to limited funds, we are unable to utilize a clipping service. Run our release and send us a copy — we'll return the favor by sending you a 1/2 pound of cultivated wild rice. If you cannot accept the wild rice, we'd still appreciate a clipping to show our growers — **thanks!**

Readers responding to the brochure offer receive a "Mail Order Supplier" list along with the 2016 *Minnesota Cultivated Wild Rice Recipes and Answers to Often Asked Questions* brochure. Due to limited funding, readers need to send a business size self-addressed-stamped-envelope to:

Minnesota Cultivated Wild Rice Council

Newest Recipes
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Italian Wild Rice Quesadillas

Credit: Minnesota Cultivated Wild Rice Council



Tuscan Beefeater's Wild Rice Salad

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