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FOOD EDITORS RELEASE

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Two-Time Winner Crowned in Wild Rice Competition

Winners Announced in “Get Wild with Wild Rice” Recipe Contest

The votes have been counted and Natalie Yarbrough of Minnetonka, MN, has won the Grand Prize in the Minnesota Cultivated Wild Rice Council’s “*Get Wild with Wild Rice*” recipe contest with her *Wild Banana Blueberry Pecan Pancakes*, a perfect blend of flavors and textures featuring the nutty richness of wild rice, the natural sweetness of ripe bananas, and the tartness of fresh blueberries, all enhanced by crunchy pecans. Together, these ingredients not only make for a delicious breakfast but are also packed with nutrients, making each pancake a wholesome treat. Whether drizzled with maple syrup or enjoyed plain, these pancakes are a delightful way to start the day!

This is the second Grand Prize win for Yarbrough in the “*Get Wild with Wild Rice*” recipe contest following her 2018 prize winning recipe - Asian-inspired *Chicken Thai Wild Rice with Peanut Sauce*, a harmonious blend of textures and tastes that tantalizes the palate and celebrates Thai cooking.

“I am so honored to win this contest,” Yarbrough said. “Wild rice has always been a staple in my kitchen, and I love finding new ways to incorporate it into my cooking. I hope my pancakes inspire others to experiment with this amazing ingredient!”

In addition to Yarbrough’s Grand Prize win, Laura Kurella of Wellston, MI, won the Council’s coveted People’s Choice award for an astonishing third year in a row with her *Argentine Wild Cherry Chicken Platter*, a delicious, slightly savory, slightly sweet creation which pairs perfectly with the smoky flavor of wild rice. Last year, Laura won the award with her *Wild Rice Beer Bread with Maple Spread*, a scrumptious bread with a hint of sweetness along with a distinctive nutty flavor. The year before that, she won with another unique offering - ‘*Popped*’ *Espresso Mocha Pillow Crisps* - which featured soft, sweet marshmallows coated in chocolate, espresso powder, cinnamon, and ‘popped’ wild rice. This is a remarkable achievement that underscores Laura’s culinary creativity and passion for wild rice.

Ken Goff, considered one of the primary developers of the modern Upper Midwestern cuisine, led a panel of judges charged with the difficult task of selecting which recipe would take home the Grand Prize. Relying on his more than four decades-worth of culinary experience and training, Goff and the judges ultimately chose *Wild Banana Blueberry Pecan Pancakes* as the winner in an extremely close race noting the sweet, ripe bananas harmonizing with juicy, plump blueberries creates a burst of fruity goodness in every bite.

Grand Prize Winner – Wild Banana Blueberry Pecan Pancakes (Natalie Yarbrough, Minnetonka, MN)

Our Grand Prize-winning recipe puts a new twist on a familiar breakfast favorite. *Wild Banana Blueberry Pecan Pancakes* combines wild rice with fresh fruit, pecans, and wild rice for a rustic, hearty breakfast classic. This is a ‘wildly’ delicious and healthy breakfast your family is sure to love.

People’s Choice Winner – Argentine Wild Cherry Chicken Platter (Laura Kurella, Wellston, MI)

Seasoned chicken thighs on a bed of wild rice covered in a flavorful chimichurri sauce. Commonly used in South American cuisine, the chimichurri sauce in *Argentine Wild Cherry Chicken Platter* has an unmistakably fresh and tangy flavor that pairs well with savory wild rice.

The Council's latest recipe brochure, *Minnesota Cultivated Wild Rice Recipes & Answers to Frequently Asked Questions*, features contest winning recipes including soups, salads, sides, and entrées. To receive your free copy, send a self-addressed-stamped-envelope to: Minnesota Cultivated Wild Rice Council, Newest Recipes, 4630 Churchill St #1, St. Paul, MN 55126.

WILD BANANA BLUEBERRY PECAN PANCAKES

Natalie Yarbrough, Minnetonka, MN

- 2¼ cups all-purpose flour
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 tsp lemon zest
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 2 tsp each: baking soda and baking powder
- 2 large eggs
- 2 tbsp brown sugar
- 2 cups buttermilk
- ¼ cup melted butter
- 1 banana, mashed
- 1 tbsp vanilla extract
- 1 cup blueberries
- ¾ cup chopped pecans
- 1 cup cooked wild rice
- 4 tbsp canola oil
- maple syrup

In large bowl, mix first 6 ingredients. In separate large bowl, whisk eggs and brown sugar. Stir in buttermilk, butter, banana, and vanilla until combined; add to dry mixture. Do not overmix. Fold in berries, pecans, and wild rice. In large skillet, heat 1 tbsp oil. Ladle in 3 pancakes using ⅓ cup of batter for each; cook 3 minutes. Flip; cook 1 minute. Repeat. Serve with syrup. 4 servings.

ARGENTINE WILD CHERRY CHICKEN PLATTER

Laura Kurella, Wellston, MI

- 1 lb Just Bare® Boneless Skinless Chicken Thighs, cubed
- salt and pepper, to taste
- 2 tbsp canola oil
- 2 cups cooked wild rice
- fresh lime wedges and cilantro, garnish

Chimichurri (blend in food processor; chill at least one hour):

- 2 cloves garlic, peeled
- 1 small shallot, peeled
- 2 tbsp each: dry red wine (or red wine vinegar) and fresh lime juice
- ½ cup pitted fresh cherries (tart or dark)
- 8 sprigs fresh cilantro
- 4 sprigs fresh parsley
- 4 fresh mint leaves
- ¼ tsp crushed red pepper flakes
- 1 tsp pink sea salt
- ½ cup canola oil

In medium skillet, brown chicken with salt and pepper in oil. Stir in wild rice; heat through. Drizzle with chimichurri; garnish. 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 2024-2025 *Minnesota Cultivated Wild Rice Recipes and Answers to Often Asked Questions* brochure. Readers should send a business size self-addressed-stamped-envelope to:

Minnesota Cultivated Wild Rice Council

Newest Recipes
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Wild Banana Blueberry Pecan Pancakes

Credit: Minnesota Cultivated Wild Rice Council



Argentine Wild Cherry Chicken Platter

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