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Chef Jerry Edwards Wins Mid-Atlantic Taste of Elegance Competition

Corporate Chef Jerry Edwards won Chef Par Excellence honors during the Mid-Atlantic Taste of Elegance competition on Nov. 2 in Baltimore. Edwards also received the People's Choice Award and second place in wine pairing category during the annual competition, which was sponsored by the National Pork Board and the Iowa Pork Producers Association (IPPA).

"This was an outstanding event, and the caliber of this year's chefs really raised the bar," said Howard Greenblatt, national foodservice marketing manager for the National Pork Board. "This year also marks the IPPA's 10th anniversary of sponsoring the competition, and we appreciate their generous support."

The Mid-Atlantic Taste of Elegance contest brings some of the region's best chefs together to showcase their talent using pork in creative, non-traditional ways. Ten chefs competed in the prestigious competition at the Renaissance Harborplace Hotel in downtown Baltimore. More than 325 invited guests from the culinary industry and the media attended the event, which was covered by Mid Atlantic Food Service Monthly and other media outlets.

Edwards' winning entrée, "Three Little Pigs," featured a Straw House (wheat berry salad garnished with miso bacon), a Stick House (smoked pork loin grilled over rosemary branches with rosemary-onion soubise), and a Brick House (brick-pressed pork belly infused with star anise). Edwards, owner of Chef's Expressions Catering in Timonium, Md., and Jerry Edwards consulting, received \$1,000 and entrance into the National Taste of Elegance competition, which will be held in the spring of 2010.

"I've competed in culinary competitions for 30 years, and I thought the Mid-Atlantic Taste of Elegance was an absolutely stellar event," says Edwards, who noted this was his first time to compete in the Pork Checkoff-sponsored contest. "I chose the 'Three Little Pigs' trio, because I wanted more ways than one to feature pork."

Edwards, who regularly develops new recipes for his catering business, uses pork in his menus whenever he can.

"Pork is the ultimate meat, and I'm always using bacon, loin and pork belly," says Edwards, who was impressed by the large crowds that lined up at the Mid-Atlantic Taste of Elegance to sample the pork. "I would never run out of ideas on how to prepare pork, even if I entered the Taste of Elegance for 20 years straight."

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