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# the CROZET gazette

## Bangkok '99 Takes Home Crozet Culinary Challenge Trophy

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The contenders: Sous Chef Tammy Pugh and chef Jason Fitzgerald from Southern Way Café; sous chef Alex Diaz and chef Mark Cosgrove from Fardowners Restaurant; sous chef Eric Morris and chef Josh Naber from da Luca Café and Wine Bar; and chefs Eddie and Pat Keomahathai from Bangkok '99.



Chefs Pat and Eddie Keomahathai, who own Bangkok '99 Thai restaurant in Crozet, were jubilant to be named the winners of the inaugural Crozet Culinary Challenge for Charity Sept. 20 at The Lodge at Old Trail.

They took home the Challenge's silver bowl trophy—the name of each year's winner will be engraved on it—and will display it in the restaurant for one year. They will bring it back to the challenge next year when they defend their bragging rights to the top against three other Crozet restaurant challengers.

This year's contenders were chef Jason Fitzgerald with sous chef Tammy Pugh from Southern Way Café; chef Mark Cosgrove with sous chef Alex Diaz from Fardowners Restaurant; chef Josh Naber with sous chef Eric Morris from da Luca Café and Wine Bar; and chefs Pat and Eddie Keomahathai from Bangkok '99.

The event was proposed by Lodge owner David Hilliard, who noted that Crozet now has 25 restaurants. He said he hopes the competition, besides helping fund local charitable needs, will raise Crozet's profile as a destination for diners from Charlottesville.

The Challenge raised \$5,000 that will be split evenly between the Build Crozet Library fund and Claudius Crozet Park to help pay for replacing the pavilion blown down by the June 29

windstorm.

### *Pat Keomahathai*



Some 250 spectators paid \$20 per ticket—\$15 of which went to the charitable cause and \$5 to cover cost of the appetizers provided—to see the four teams cook, in one hour, an entrée and dessert from ingredients they were unaware of until the competition began. They were allowed to bring ingredients they might want with them. The crowd sipped wine and jammed in front of the cooking stations as the chefs worked intently.

Lodge chef Michael Hinricks was the host and prepared most of the appetizers for spectators. He provided each team with two burners but they were allowed to bring more if they wished.

The judges were Bill Miller, a resident of The Lodge; county supervisors Ann Mallek and Duane Snow; and Laurie Shannon, who was chosen to be a judge when her ticket number was drawn from a hat. Judges could award a maximum of 20 points per course (40 total): five points for taste, five points for presentation, five points for originality and five points for their use of the mystery ingredients.

When they were revealed, the mystery ingredients turned out to be duck raised by Free Union Grass Farm, apples from Henley's and Chiles' orchards, and mushrooms grown by a.m. FOG in Afton.

### *Eddie Keomahathai with Bangkok '99's winning dessert and entrée*



"We have an amazing local supply of protein," said Hinricks, "and it being Crozet, we had to do apples. It's the heritage."

As the chefs got going, Bill Schrader, chair of the Build Crozet Library fund drive, announced to the crowd that he had received two checks that evening, one for \$5,000 from The Green Olive Tree, a contribution toward the new library's fireplace, and another from the Crozet Women's Club for \$10,000.

The chefs were visibly nervous before the challenge began and when the crowd counted down the last seconds on the time clock, their relief was palpable as they slapped high fives with each other. Whatever the spurs of competition, they had felt a bond as they surveyed each others' stations and the plates that were being presented to the judges.

"This is tough," said Eddie Keomahathai. "It's tough to fuse some things."

Duane Snow, having sampled the plates with evident pleasure, said, "Everything was wonderful. You can't go wrong at any of these restaurants. It was all delicious."

“This is what they call a scorecard decision in boxing,” said Hilliard as he prepared to announce the winner. “The scores are so close.”

“Thank you so much from the bottom of our hearts,” said Keomahathai on hearing that Bangkok '99 had won. “We are one big restaurant in Crozet.”

“It was really tight for the runner-up,” said Hilliard, “but the score goes to Fardowners.” Fardowners chef Mark Cosgrove was given a large county-fair-style blue ribbon.



“Pat and I got together for a week before the competition,” said Keomahathai. “We were waiting for the mystery ingredients. We tried to be ready for whatever they would give us.”

“I can’t say thank you to the people of Crozet enough. We love being part of this community. These are great guys,” he said, gesturing to his competitors. “We get along. We had fun.”

The event included a silent auction to which several local artists donated works for sale. Contributors were Meg West, Nancy Ross, Camilyn Leone, Helen Hilliard, John Hurlburt, Carolyn Ratcliffe, Isabel Abbot, and Fred Williamson.

Local vineyards and breweries also donated cases of wine and beer to the event, among them King Family, Stinson, Pollak, White Hall, Glass House, Mountfair, and Well Hung Vineyards and Blue Mountain and Starr Hill breweries.

The judges’ sample plates and scorecards.

Tagged as: [Bangkok 99](#), [community event](#), [Crozet](#), [Crozet Culinary Competition](#), [da Luca Cafe and Wine Bar](#), [Fardowners](#), [fundraiser](#), [restaurant](#), [Southern Way Cafe](#), [top chef](#)

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