

Aurora chef to compete in nutrition challenge



By Angela Gismondi

Aurora chef Lye Fung Wong is a finalist in Sunrise Senior Living's second annual Senior Eats Nutritional Challenge.

The Aurora resident and head chef at Sunrise of Aurora is competing in the finals this week, which will take place at a The Fairfax, a Sunrise Senior Living community in Virginia. Each finalist will cook their signature dish, which will be judged by local Sunrise residents.

Chefs from close to 300 of Sunrise's communities across the U.S. developed their best healthy, creative and delicious recipes that meet the unique nutritional needs of seniors, while embracing local flavors and ingredients. Only five finalists were selected as the most innovative chefs of their kind.

Fung Wong's original recipe, Baked Spinach Turkey Meatballs earned her a spot in the competition. She is the only Canadian chef selected to be in the finals. The other finalists are from Brighton Gardens of Dunwoody, GA, Sunrise of West Hills, CA, Sunrise of Wilmington, DE and Sunrise of Burlington, MA.

"It is an honour for me to be one of the finalists in this nutrition competition and I'm really excited," said Fung Wong. "I'm representing a great team and I want to make them proud."

Her recipe meets all the requirements for the competition - low sodium and low fat, about 200 to 500 calories per serving and includes Vitamin E and C.

"It's very nutritious for our residents," she explained. "We get a lot of great feedback from our residents and they really love it. Our residents are always commenting on the great food and the great flavor of the meals they receive every day."

Raised in China, Fung Wong's love of food began at a young age. When she was just seven years old, she began helping her parents who owned a restaurant.

"I knew I wanted to be a chef one day," she said, adding her parents currently own a restaurant in Trinidad specializing in Caribbean and Chinese food. "My parents are my inspiration."

Fung Wong completed all her chef training at Humber College in Toronto. As one of the top culinary students, she was selected to travel to Europe to study different types of cuisine.

?It was a life fulfillment for me and I learned a lot from top chefs,? Fung Wong explained.

She worked at restaurants, hotels and golf clubs before she eventually settled at Sunrise Aurora where she has been working for two years.

?I truly love working at the retirement home,? said Fung Wong. ?I love working with seniors because they are so appreciative of everything you do for them.?

She prefers working at Sunrise to working in a restaurant.

?A restaurant is more hectic and there is no room for socializing with clients,? said Fung Wong. ?With so much hustle and bustle, you never get any feedback. It (Sunrise) is also more flexible and allows me to have a life outside of work.?

As the head chef at Sunrise Aurora, she is in charge of cooking three delicious meals a day plus providing snacks and organizing socials for the residents.

?There is a lot happening in our community,? said Fung Wong.

She is always learning new things and recently graduated from the Canadian Health Care Association's food service and nutrition management program. Her food selections promote cognitive function, memory and heart health in senior citizens.

?I love to cook with a lot of flavours, fresh herbs and spices to enhance the flavor of the food,? said Fung Wong adding she tries to incorporate family recipes shared by the seniors into the menu. ?All our desserts are homemade but we try and keep down the sugar to accommodate all different types of diets. Being a nutritionist I love promoting healthy eating for residents.?