

Meet Your Iron Chefs: Dharshan Gopal of King Richard's



By Jeff Doner

He's no rookie in the kitchen, but it will be the first time King Richard's English Pub Chef Dharshan Gopal tests his mettle in the upcoming Iron Chef Aurora competition.

"This is the first time for me doing anything like this," he said. "I have been watching all the cooking shows on TV, but basically we will prep everything here at the restaurant and then we will take our dishes there and serve to four or five judges to try out."

Gopal has been a chef for about 15 years since coming to Canada from Sri Lanka. Upon his arrival, he started out as a regular line cook at his uncle's restaurant, mainly doing prep and other tasks.

From there, he realized his passion was in cooking and kept pushing himself further to the point where he eventually became a head chef.

His specialties are Mexican and Italian Cuisine, but said his English-North Indian style chicken curry has become a favourite at King Richards as well as their smoked meats.

"We are known for doing our own meats for burgers to sausage meat and everything," he said. "We grind our own meats and do the smoking, which I never did before coming to King Richard's. Here we do smoked pork and back ribs, and people really like it, so we want to show them that."

That commitment to quality dishes and Gopal's creativity are exactly what King Richard's is hoping to showcase at Iron Chef Aurora.

For the competition, Gopal will be cooking with two ingredients he is very familiar with from his experience with Italian cuisine.

Those secret ingredients are still under wraps, but Gopal tipped his hand on what he might be preparing on the day of. For an appetizer, a smoked salmon dish with capers and pico de gallo. The main course will likely be glazed pork belly with baked beans and salad.

As for the competition itself, Gopal said he can't wait to show his skills in a competition with the Aurora's best.

?I think there will be about 400 people there,? he said. ?I'm not really nervous about it. I have a good sous chef, Ben Grant, he's my right hand. But I want to help make our restaurant great and show that we are number one in Aurora.

?I was a little nervous at the beginning, having a conversation about doing this, but I'm pretty confident now. Let's do it.?