

Meet your Iron Chefs: Mike Dysart



Maunder's Mike Dysart is one of five local chefs facing off in Iron Chef Aurora.

By Brock Weir

As a young guy growing up with dreams of being a chef, Mike Dysart took inspiration from TV chef Jamie Oliver, a young guy himself.

Watching Oliver work his magic with a well equipped kitchen and some pretty common ingredients, Mr. Dysart says he thought Oliver was doing some "amazing things."

"That is what I wanted to do," he says. "Every time I saw his show and read one of his books, I found he was really creative and that is how I wanted to go about my career."

And succeed he has. Mr. Dysart, now a chef at Maunder's Food Shop, is one of five local chefs spending these last few weeks leading up to Thursday, April 18 strategizing and coming up with a game plan before facing off the others in "Kitchen Stadium" for the very first Iron Chef Aurora.

Slated to be held at the Aurora Community Centre, Iron Chef Aurora is the brainchild of Habachat's Debbie McGrath and Tim Newnham to not only showcase local restaurants and chefs in a fun way, but also raise much needed funds for local charities. Joining Mr. Dysart, who will be raising money for Kerry's Place Autism Services, will be Oakland Hall's David Charyk working with the Alzheimer's Society of York Region, Thay Siharath of Orchid Thai with Yellow Brick House, Rib Lizotte of Edward Street Bistro with the Haddan Eby Endowment Fund, and Aw Shucks' Grant Robertson with Rose of Sharon. "I think it is great," said Mr. Dysart of the pairing. "Aurora is a great town, so anything that can help different charities is something I would love to do in any way I could."

This sentiment is shared by Tim Maunder.

"It was about doing something for the community and we are engaging charities that are in Aurora," he says. "The other part was sort of putting on display businesses in Aurora. They have been doing Ribfest in Aurora, but none of the businesses relate to Aurora. I just thought it was a good chance to give something back and engage everybody in the neighbourhood."

For Mr. Dysart and Mr. Maunder, Iron Chef and the Taste of Aurora Festival, which will follow in the Aurora Community Centre through the weekend, will be to showcase what our local restaurants have to offer.

"I really hope I showcases the businesses of all five of us," said Mr. Maunder. "We are more varied than what they see on the roadside driving by. They assume Maunder's is just a butcher shop or some other guys are just restaurants."

Adds Mr. Dysart: "Come see what the chefs north of Toronto have to offer!"

Although he can't give too much away, what Mr. Dysart will have to offer is a few different ways of cooking lamb, using two secret ingredient that will be shared by all Iron Chef challengers, and trying to be as creative as they can with it. Sharing his favourite things to cook, however, does nothing to narrow down the possibilities.

"I love curries and I love different types of spices and things like that," he said, noting he often makes his own spice blends. "I also like the classic, family-style cooking like roasts and that kind of stuff, so it is all over the place. It is not just one specific genre, but I like to try new things.

"I hope the audience thinks [what I cook on April 18] looks good, is presentable, and that it is creative. Maybe it is something they wouldn't have thought of, or something they have never seen before."

This is the first in a series getting insight from Aurora's Iron Chefs. For more information on either Iron Chef Aurora, or Taste of Aurora, visit www.habachat.com/ironchef.