Food and wine festival is more than eating and drinking

By Kathryn Reed

TRUCKEE – It's not often the secret ingredient is wiggling around on the counter. But that is what two chefs had to overcome during the annual Blazing Pans competition.

2011 champion Chef Sean Conry of Longboards Bar & Grill at Plumas Pines took on Chef Elsa Corrigan of Mamasake Sushi from the Village at Squaw Valley.

Crawfish from Lake Tahoe was the secret ingredient the two chefs had to incorporate into a handful of dishes at the 27th annual Lake Tahoe Autumn Food & Wine Festival earlier this month.

Lake Tahoe Lobster Company provided the secret ingredient -- crawfish -- for the Blazing Pans competition at Northstar on Sept. 8. Photos/Kathryn Reed

The fun thing about the entire multi-day event that is mostly at the Village at Northstar is that it's more than eating and

drinking. Non-food vendors are interspersed with those with food. Cooking related demonstrations are going on at various locations. Some things are free, while others have a fee associated with them.

Based on the Iron Chef competition on the Food Network, the Blazing Pans contest tests the chefs' ability to create dishes using the secret ingredient in a certain amount of time. More time was incorporated to accommodate the need to peel the crawfish. Each chef had the assistance of one sous chef.

Crawfish is not something either chef has in his or her kitchen, so each was at an equal disadvantage.

"I changed my original plan 10 times," Corrigan said. "For training for something like this you have to be fluid because time is of the essence."

Salads, bisques, spring rolls, chicken stuffed with crawfish – those were just some of the dishes the chefs created.

In the end, it was Corrigan who was crowned the winner of this year's Blazing Pans competition.

Other winners from the 27th Annual Lake Tahoe Autumn Food & Wine Festival:

Judges' Awards – Culinary Competition & Grand Tasting

Best Food & Wine Pairings:

Gold: Granlibakken Lodge – Mushroom stuffed with Red Lentil Hash, Chevre, Duck and Red Currant

Morgan 2010 Pinot Noir

Silver: Jake's On the Lake – Seared Scallop

Wente 2010 Chardonnay

Bronze: North Tahoe Catering – Chile-Smoked Beef Tender,

Roasted Peach Truffle Sauce/Beet/Yukon Chip

Renwood 2010 Old Vine Zinfandel

Best Pairing Food and Beverages (Other Than Wine):

Gold: Hard Rock Café, Lake Tahoe – Bayou Shrimp Burger with BBQ Coleslaw

Charbay Artisan Distillery – Blood Orange Vodka Negroni

Best White Wine:

Gold: Wither Hills 2010 Sauvignon Blanc (Marlborough New Zealand)

Silver: Wente 2010 Chardonnay (Monterey)

Bronze: ZD Winery 2010 Chardonnay (Napa Valley)

Best Red Wine:

Gold: Frank Family 2010 Pinot Noir (Napa Valley)

Silver: Morgan 2010 Pinot Noir (Santa Lucia 12 Clones)

Bronze: Renwood 2010 Old Vine Zinfandel (Amador)

Best Food:

Gold: Jake’s On the Lake – Seared Scallop 2

Silver: Six Peaks Grille – Roasted Beet Salad, Arugula, Goat Cheese,

Shallots, Whole Grain Mustard Vinaigrette.

Bronze: Hawk’s Restaurant – House-Smoked Duroc Pork Belly, Sweet Corn Pudding, Mariposa Plums

2012 People’s Choice Awards

Best Food & Wine Pairings:

The Chocolate Bar – Turkey En Crepinette with Sweet Potato Gaufrette

Francis Coppola 2009 Petite Sirah (Napa Valley)

Best Food:

The Chocolate Bar – Turkey En Crepinette with Sweet Potato Gaufrette

Best Red Wine:

Stanger Vineyards 2006 Syrah Library Reserve (Westside Paso Robles)

Best White Wine:

ZD Winery 2010 Chardonnay (Napa Valley)

Best Pairing Food and Beverages (Other Than Wine):

Hard Rock Café, Lake Tahoe – Bayou Shrimp Burger with BBQ Coleslaw

Charbay Artisan Distillery – Blood Orange Vodka Negroni

Best Table Presentation:

Northstar California Resort.

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