



Media Release

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Northland Hospitality Championship turns up the heat

More than 80 hopeful young chefs sweated it out in the NorthTec kitchens when they took part in this year's Northland Hospitality Championship.

The Apprentice Restaurant at the Raumanga campus was a hive of activity all day, as the competitors from NorthTec hospitality, NorthTec Trades Academy, and high schools from all over the region battled for supremacy.

This year the Penguin Wholesalers Northland Training Chef of the Year was a triple class competition, which saw Level 5 Diploma in Hospitality student Nik Ponomarov gain a silver medal on both Live Knife Skills and Salmon Main course classes and a gold medal in his Live Dessert class, earning him an overall gold medal. Nik is the first recipient in the history of Northland's Training Chef of the Year to be awarded a gold medal and has won the right to represent our region at the national finals in Auckland at the end of July. National Salon Director Grant Kitchen, who headed the judging panel, said, "Nik worked outstandingly under pressure and showed some great skill. We wish him well for the finals later next month". Nik will enjoy a short break before resuming training in readiness for the stage of the competition.

The main event for the afternoon was the Nestle Professional Magic Box Team Event. A 2 ½ hour pressure test in which 5 teams of 2 chefs, all from NorthTec, were given a box of ingredients to design and cook 4 portions of an entrée and 4 portions of a main course. Each team had 30 minutes to rummage through the boxes and design their menu before the two-hour countdown started to prepare their chosen dishes. Each dish was blind tasted and marked by a team of taste judges, whilst a separate judging panel assessed their techniques in the kitchen.

Man of the moment, Nik Ponomarov teamed up with fellow Level 5 Diploma in Hospitality student Sharon Dhuria to take out the challenge, winning with silver medals.

Overall NorthTec hauled 6 bronze, 16 silvers and 3 gold medals, a very good effort and a testimony to the success of North Tec's students and trainers.

The NorthTec's Trades Academy was also in action, beating local secondary school Whangarei Girls High by a close 20 points to be awarded the Regent New World Top Secondary Schools Trophy.

NorthTec tutor and event organiser, Hughie Blues, said, "It was a very busy day and it was a long haul from the 5.30am start to the prize giving at 6pm. It is a lot of hard work but we are always well supported by industry personnel and the students really embrace the occasion."

"Anita Sarginson, the chief judge from Wellington, comments every year that at the Northland event in particular, whānau play such a big part and really support their young people. This is something we are very proud of," continued Mr Blues.

Northland Chefs, the local branch of the New Zealand Chefs Association, run the Northland Hospitality Championship. This is the 10th year NorthTec has hosted the event. We would like to take the opportunity to thank our team of sponsors who come back year after year and share the same beliefs we do. Without their support, this event would not be possible.

- NorthTec
- New World Regent
- Penguin Wholesalers & Regal Salmon
- Nestle Professional
- QRC Culinary
- Barkers Fruit Processors
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NorthTec is the Tai Tokerau (Northland) region's largest provider of tertiary education, with campuses and learning centres in Whangarei, Kerikeri, Rāwene, Kaikohe and Kaitaia. NorthTec also has over 60 community-based delivery points from Coatesville in rural Rodney to Ngataki in the Far North.

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