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ONLINE POLL

Area's top chefs compete for 'Best of Star Shine'

By Tim Pratt
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STARKVILLE -- A battle among some of the area's top chefs will take place this weekend at the Starkville Area Arts Council's fifth annual Star Shine event.

Five chefs will compete in a cook-off tonight for the title of "Best of Star Shine," and patrons will have the opportunity to sample the dishes. The public will then cast their votes for the top chef.

Competitors include Jay Yates of The Veranda; Ty Thames of Restaurant Tyler; Raymond Jackson of Doe's Eat Place; Carnell McGee of Harvey's; and Vicki Leach of Viking Cooking School. Each chef will have a work station to fix their specialty, Star Shine organizer Paige Laws said.

Celebrity chef Tim Creehan, who recently showed off his culinary prowess at the Sundance Film Festival, will be on hand to judge the competitors on taste, originality and presentation. He will be joined on the judge's stand by artist and author Wyatt Waters, and Mississippi Arts Commission executive director Malcolm White.

The event begins Friday at 6:30 p.m. at Mississippi State University's Raspet Flight Center on Airport Road. Since the flight center doesn't have a kitchen, Creehan will bring a kitchen with him from his cooking school, The Destin Culinary Center, in Florida.

"This is really innovative to have something like this out there," Star Shine organizer Andy Gaston said.

Musician Jeff Cummings will also be on hand to provide live music.

"It's going to be a real casual affair," Laws said.

Saturday

Although patrons will have the opportunity to wine and dine Friday evening, the activities will pick up again Saturday morning.

Beginning at 10:30 a.m., Creehan will lead a cooking class and demonstrate his skills in the kitchen while preparing his favorite dishes. After he finishes his presentation, patrons will have the opportunity to taste the food, then take home a cookbook full of recipes.

One of the Star Shine's featured events, however, will be the five-course gourmet dinner Creehan plans to fix for patrons on Saturday evening. Wine will be offered with each course.

"This is going to be very elegant," Laws said.

Reservations

Reservations are required for each portion of the Star Shine event.

The chefs' cook-off Friday night costs \$50 per person; the cooking class with Creehan on Saturday morning costs \$75 per person, but includes a free cookbook or gift pack; the dinner Saturday evening costs \$100 per person or \$175 per couple. Package deals are available.

Proceeds from the event will go toward scholarships and grants for area students.

For more information, visit <http://starkvillearts.org>, or call the Arts Council at 662-324-3080.

Seating is limited.

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