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CALIFORNIA RICE COMMISSION ANNOUNCES 2006 SUSHIMASTERS COMPETITION

Second annual statewide event links cuisine, culture, commerce and community through sushi

SACRAMENTO, CA – The 2006 SushiMasters California Statewide Sushi Competition will be held at the Memorial Auditorium in Sacramento, California on Monday, September 18, 2006. A live sushi competition among California's top sushi chefs and an awards presentation to internationally-renowned Chef Nobu Matsuhisa will celebrate the tradition and innovation of sushi in the United States since its introduction only forty years ago.

The California Rice Commission launched the 2006 SushiMasters competition on March 7 in Sacramento with a mini-competition between Senator Gil Cedillo (D-Los Angeles), Senator Jeff Denham (R-Merced) and Assemblyman Doug LaMalfa (R-Richvale). The friendly contest required the elected officials to roll, cut and plate a California roll. All three amateur sushi chefs represent regions of the state closely tied to the history of sushi and California rice.

"SushiMasters is a one of a kind event, and California is the ideal host for an experience of this magnitude. This is the only statewide sushi competition in the U.S. that features professional sushi chefs demonstrating the quality and artistry of their preparation of both traditional and innovative sushi," notes Tim Johnson, President-CEO of the California Rice Commission. "It's also unique in that the event is a tribute to the Japanese pioneers who brought sushi to the U.S. Their first few restaurants have had a powerful influence on cuisine and diversity across the country, and particularly in California."

Due to the popularity of the 2005 SushiMasters event, a similar effort is launching in Japan this year. Professional chefs will compete following similar competitive guidelines as their U.S. counterparts, and in September the winner of the Japanese event will travel to Sacramento for the 2006 SushiMasters competition.

Over 500 guests are expected to attend, with a limited number of tickets available for purchase by the general public. Part of the proceeds from the event will provide scholarships for future chefs and will benefit cultural programs at the Japanese American National Museum.

The California Rice Commission represents all of the rice growers and handlers who farm and process high-quality, premium medium grain japonica rice – the variety of rice found in every piece of sushi served in the U.S. today.

To learn more about the 2006 SushiMasters California Statewide Sushi Competition, visit www.sushimasters.com or contact Laura Murphy at lmurphy@calrice.org or 916/929-2264.

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