

SUSHIMASTERS

For Immediate Release

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Two new masters are born

Regional winners move on to SushiMasters Finals after a 45-minute sushi showdown

Sacramento, CA – Six of the Sacramento region's finest sushi chefs faced off in a fast-paced, Iron Chef-style battle in the 2007 Sacramento Region SushiMaster competition. After a hard-fought 45-minute showdown, Chef Billy Ngo from Kru Japanese Cuisine in Sacramento and Chef Koji Ogawa from Japanese Kitchen in Fresno, CA emerged victorious. The winners demonstrated superior, innovative techniques and a mastery of traditional flavors, not only earning their regional titles, but their rightful places in the statewide SushiMasters Finals, to be held in June 2008.

The regional competition, held Tuesday, September 18 at the Sacramento Asian Sports Foundation in Elk Grove, CA in front of a crowd of more than 300, began with a traditional Sake Barrel Breaking Ceremony. Afterwards, the pounding of powerful Taiko drums signaled for the sushi battle to begin. With only 45 minutes to create two plates, a traditional Morikomi plate and a Signature roll, the six chefs strove to out-do their opponents with superior creativity and flavors. Each dish was judged on taste, presentation and overall execution.

"The competition was fast, furious and satisfying, and the crowd made the whole experience even better," said Chef Bill Ngo of Sacramento's Kru Contemporary Japanese Cuisine, one of the two winning chefs moving on to the statewide finals in June 2008. "Having the opportunity to compete against such experienced and talented chefs was such an exciting challenge and a real honor. Even more satisfying, though, was seeing how popular sushi has become and knowing our hard work is respected and enjoyed by so many people."

The six competing chefs were Chef Elsa Corrigan of Mamasake (Olympic Village, CA), Chef Billy Ngo of Kru Contemporary Japanese Cuisine (Sacramento, CA), Chef Russell Okubo of Dragonfly Restaurant (Sacramento, CA), Chef Li "Joe" Lu of Mikuni Japanese Restaurant and Sushi Bar (Sacramento, CA), Chef Koji Ogawa of Japanese Kitchen (Fresno, CA), and Chef Naoyuki Shiraishi of Zen Sushi (Sacramento, CA).

The SushiMasters competition began in 2004 as an annual event. Due to the competition's overwhelming popularity, the California Rice Commission, the presenter of the event, expanded it into a series of regional competitions spanning two-years finishing with the statewide final. The 2008 SushiMasters Finals, to be held in Sacramento in June 2008, brings together the regional winners from throughout California to prove they are the best of the best and deserving of the title, SushiMaster.

The competition is presented by the California Rice Commission and the Sacramento Asian Pacific Chamber of Commerce as a means to educate people about the important relationship between California rice and sushi. With over 95 percent of California's rice grown within 100 miles of Sacramento, the Sacramento Valley has earned the title of "heart of the state's rice industry." California rice is used in every piece of sushi made in the United States, as well as in many restaurants around the world.

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For more information about SushiMasters, visit www.sushimasters.com.

To find out more about the California Rice Commission and the California rice industry, visit www.calrice.org.

To learn more about the Sacramento Asian Pacific Chamber of Commerce, visit their website at www.sacasiancc.org.