



Contact: Whitney Ehret
NFCA Communications
whitney@celiaccentral.org
(215) 325-1306 x.103

Top Chefs Showcase Gluten-Free Talents at Appetite for Awareness 2009 *Philadelphians fill Wachovia Center to help raise awareness of celiac disease*

Ambler, PA (October 5th 2009) - A crowd of 1200 gathered at the Wachovia Center on Wednesday, September 30th to celebrate the gluten-free lifestyle during the 6th annual Appetite for Awareness event. Hosted by the National Foundation for Celiac Awareness (NFCA) and title sponsor Thomas Jefferson University and Hospitals, the event honoring John Binswanger and his family raised over \$300,000 to support the organization's national awareness campaign and programming.

Over thirty of Philadelphia's best restaurants participated in the event, which featured an entirely gluten-free menu. The festivities were a special treat for guests with celiac disease, an autoimmune disorder treated only through a gluten-free diet, eliminating foods containing wheat, barley and rye. Current estimates suggest the disease affects about 3 million Americans, yet over 95% live without a diagnosis.

Comcast-Spectacor Chairman Ed Snider, who is a member of the NFCA Board of Directors, generously donated the Wachovia Center facility, which has been home to Appetite for Awareness event since 2008.

"I am so pleased Comcast-Spectacor and the Wachovia Center was a part of the 6th Annual Appetite for Awareness celebration. Thanks to Alice Bast and her team, the National Foundation for Celiac Awareness has moved mountains to raise awareness of celiac disease and gluten intolerance. I am proud to be associated with NFCA and whole-heartedly support the mission and work of this fine organization," said Snider.

76ers broadcast announcer Marc Zumoff, Emmy winning host of Christina Cooks, Christina Pirello, and former NBC10 anchor Steve Levy emceed the festivities, including the evening's main event, an iron chef style competition in which chef's were assisted by some of the city's best physicians in a contest for the 'Best Gluten-Free Dish' award honors.

For the second year in a row, Vetri's chef Brad Spence won the iron chef competition and the title of 'Best Gluten-Free Dish'. Spence's Pork and Ricotta Meatballs with Smashed White Beans and Ricotta Salata, received best in show from judges Tracey Seaman, Test Kitchen Director of *Everyday with Rachel Ray Magazine*, Ashley Primis, Food and Lifestyle Editor of *Philadelphia Magazine*, and Rita Balice-Gordon, professor at the University of Pennsylvania and member of NFCA's Scientific/Medical Advisory Board.

"It was so great to see the chef's creativity sparked to come up with dishes to not only meet the gluten-free criteria, but to take this style of cooking out of the realm of disease and give it its rightful place in the realm of cuisine," said Pirello.

Also repeating as the 'People's Choice' award winner was chef Pasquale Masters of Pasta Pomodoro, who prepared Pollo Alla Vodka with Gluten-free Penne.

-More-

Guests were also able to taste gluten-free products at the event's robust vendor Marketplace, comprised of more than fifty of the nation's finest vendors, leaving with goodie bags filled with coupons and free samples.

In conjunction with Appetite for Awareness, all participating restaurants were trained in gluten-free kitchen protocol through NFCA's Gluten-Free Resource Education Awareness Training (GREAT) Program. Through this program NFCA and the Philadelphia restaurant community have created the first and largest Gluten-Free Neighborhood in the nation.

2009 participating restaurants included: Agiato Restaurant, Aramark, Bar Ferdinand, Beneluxx Tasting Room, Bindi, Café Estelle, Capital Grille, Casona, Chifa, City Tavern, Cochon, Devil's Den, Distrito, Drexelbrook Catering, El Camino Real, Feast Your Eyes, Fish, Holy Smoke, Little Fish, L'OCA, Lolita, Magianno's Little Italy, Malograno, Osteria, Pasta Pomodoro, RUBB, Saute, Time, Terra, Vetri, Vintage, Wegmans, Xochitl, and Zahav.

Information about the 2009 Appetite for Awareness event including photos and video coverage can be viewed on NFCA's website, www.CeliacCentral.org.

About Celiac Disease

Celiac Disease is an autoimmune digestive disease that damages the small intestine and interferes with absorption of nutrients from food. An estimated three million Americans have celiac disease yet 95% remain undiagnosed, resulting in a fourfold increase in the risk of early death and numerous debilitating conditions including infertility, neuropathy and even cancer. The only treatment is a lifelong gluten-free diet.

Celiac is triggered by consumption of the protein called gluten, which is found in wheat, barley and rye. Left untreated, people with celiac disease can develop further complications such as other autoimmune diseases, osteoporosis, thyroid disease, and some cancers. An estimated three million Americans have celiac disease, but about 1 in every 4,700 with the disease receives an accurate diagnosis.

About the National Foundation for Celiac Awareness

The National Foundation for Celiac Awareness (NFCA) is a non-profit organization dedicated to raising awareness and funding for celiac disease that will advance research, education and screening amongst medical professionals, children and adults. Visit www.celiaccentral.org for more information.

Contact: Whitney Ehret
National Foundation for Celiac Awareness
(215) 325-1306 x.103
whitney@celiaccentral.org
www.celiaccentral.org

###