



Island Chefs' Survival Challenge for Madrona Farm a Sweet Success

By Karen Platt

In early October, 10 of Victoria's finest chefs demonstrated exactly how far they were willing to go in the name of fresh, local ingredients in the Island Chefs' Survival Challenge at Madrona Farm. The event was a fundraiser for the Friends of Madrona Farm Society to purchase Madrona Farm for protection in a land trust with The Land Conservancy of BC.

At the Challenge, the chefs leapt, crawled and balanced over and under various obstacles, then attempted a very wet row out to Condiment Island to pick up packs of spices and cooking utensils. After harvesting their own produce from Madrona's fields, they returned to outdoor stations equipped with only a BBQ, a couple of two-burner propane stoves, their two favourite skillets, a few knives and a cutting board. They had one hour to create "masterpiece meals" from their just-picked farm fresh ingredients.

The culinary wizardry the chefs performed under "survival" conditions was nothing less than amazing. Salivating spectators got to prove their appreciation by bidding on the meals during an auction. Twenty lucky winners were served their masterpiece at a beautiful table in the field; other spectators got to sample food, local wine and beer contributed by the participating restaurants and other sponsors.

The chefs hope that the event underscores the enormous importance of good ingredients to the creation of fabulous meals and raises awareness about the need to preserve our dwindling farmland for farming.

While the overall fundraising goal to protect Madrona Farm is \$2.5 million, the Friends of Madrona Farm Society must raise a deposit of \$250,000 on the property by December 5, 2008. More information about the campaign, please visit www.madronafarm.com. Tax deductible donations can be made at www.conservancy.bc.ca/donatetomadrona.

The Land Conservancy is a registered charity and land trust protecting wilderness areas, cultural landmarks, and agricultural lands in B.C. Since 1997, it has protected over 120,000 acres of sensitive and threatened lands around the province, involving more than 300 projects. It has grown to include over 8,300 members, and is now part of an international network of National Trusts with over 7.5 million members. Some of The Land Conservancy's earliest work centred on connecting with ranchers in B.C.'s interior to protect grasslands ecosystems, which are home

to one-third of B.C.'s endangered species. In 2001, The Land Conservancy launched the Conservation Partners Program, through which it works to promote local farmers who are stewards of wildlife habitat on their land. www.conservancy.bc.ca