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## **BATON ROUGE'S TOP CHEFS COMPETE FOR LOUISIANA TITLE SATURDAY**

**The *Southern Breeze Wine + Culinary Festival* presents **Baton Rouge's first annual Gulf Coast Chef Challenge Saturday, April 5.****

**Baton Rouge, La. March 31, 2008**— The top chefs in Baton Rouge will go head-to-head Saturday during the first annual ***Southern Breeze Gulf Coast Chef Challenge***. This event, open only to the media, will feature seven invited chefs creating signature dishes during a live, one-hour cooking competition. The Chef Challenge is part of the ***Southern Breeze Wine + Culinary Festival***, a three-day event that travels across the Gulf Coast states educating and entertaining guests with wine dinners, wine tastings, seminars, and a walkabout brunch. The weekend-long event brings travelers from all over the United States as well as locals to the capital of Louisiana to celebrate food, wine, and Gulf Coast culture **April 4-6, 2008**.

The *Southern Breeze* Gulf Coast Chef Challenge will kick off Saturday's festivities at **10 a.m.** This event will take place in the **DCS by Fisher & Paykel Theater** located on the grounds of the Old Louisiana State Capitol. Each participant will be given a common protein and choose a starch and vegetable used to create a signature dish during this "Iron Chef" style competition performed on state-of-the-art DCS cooking systems.

Chefs vying for Louisiana's title include **Chef Scott Varnedoe**- Varnedoe's Carriage House Restaurant, **Chef Michael Loupe**- The Hilton Baton Rouge Capitol Center, **Chef Justin Ferguson**- Capital City Grill, **Chef William Wells**- Culinary Productions, **Chef Martin Clear**- Baton Rouge Country Club, **Chef Joel Robert**- The Cabin Restaurant, and **Chef Chris Nealy**- Mansur's on the Boulevard.

**Celebrity Chef Tim Creehan** of Beach Walk Crystal Beach and Creehan's Copper Grill in Destin, Fla. will be on hand to host the live one-hour cooking demonstration. At the end of the hour, a distinctive panel of judges including Jason **Gronlund**, executive chef for Tabasco, **Ewell Smith**, executive director of the Louisiana Seafood Board, and **Corrine Cook**, food columnist of "Gourmet Galley" for *The Advocate*, will select the event's most outstanding chef to be named **Louisiana's Top Chef**. The winner will go on to compete against winners from Alabama, Florida, and Mississippi later this year for title of ***Southern Breeze's 2008 Gulf Coast Chef Challenge Chef of the Year***.

The winner will be announced at 2 p.m. during the Grand Wine Tasting Saturday afternoon. The Grand Wine Tasting, held on the scenic grounds of the Old Louisiana State Capitol, will feature over 150 boutique wines available to sample in a relaxed, yet invigorating atmosphere. The seminars throughout the day help to heighten

the Grand Wine Tasting experience. Wine seminars will be presented by **Michael Bryan**, executive director of Atlanta Wine School, and culinary seminars by **Chef Tim Creehan**. Most wines being poured during Saturday's event will be available for purchase and all retail wine sales are sponsored by the [Louisiana Restaurant Association](#).

The **Southern Breeze Wine + Culinary Festival** is a three day event that blends premium wines, food, and Gulf Coast culture into an entertaining, educational, and exciting weekend-long event. This year marks the fifth season of the Festival with stops in **Biloxi, Miss.; Baton Rouge, La.; Orange Beach, Ala.;** and **Northwest Florida**. For more information, visit [www.southernbreeze.com/winefest](http://www.southernbreeze.com/winefest) or contact Karen Kirkland Ochoa at 800-239-9880 or [kareno@compassbiz.com](mailto:kareno@compassbiz.com).

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