

WNC dominates Star Chefs awards

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WINNING SMILE: *Chef Mike Moore of Seven Sows Bourbon and Larder won the Community Award in Star Chefs magazine's recent Rising Stars competition for the Carolinas. Photo courtesy of Star Chefs.*

I told you so. Two weeks ago, when I wrote about [national magazine Star Chefs'](#) nomination of more than 30 chefs from Western North Carolina (out of more than 160 total nominations), I wrote "[I have a feeling](#) that when the panel makes up its mind about the Rising Stars of the Carolinas, we will see on a national scale how special our food scene is." And, boy, does it feel good to be right about that!

Star Chefs has been recognizing the best and brightest culinarians in specified pockets across the country since 2002, and they turned their gaze to the Carolinas this fall. In the end, more than a third of all the Rising Stars awards for both North and South Carolina were handed to WNC chefs and artisans.

"Some of the preeminent chefs in our country have received nods from Star Chefs over the years," said Chef William Dissen of The Market Place restaurant, who was awarded one of the eleven awards. "The fact that so many people from Asheville were even nominated really speaks volumes about our emerging food scene here." As a winner of one of the 11 awards, Dissen can now count himself among those honored to receive that prestigious nod, with *Star Chefs* editor Antoinette Bruno calling him, "A natural leader with community spirit."

Other Rising Star Chef winners included Nathan Allen of Knife & Fork in Spruce Pine, Brian Canipelli of Cucina24 and Matt Dawes of Bull & Beggar. Also honored locally was Cúrate chef Katie Button, who received the Sustainability award, and Seven Sows' Michael Moore, who won the Community award.

Bruno noted a camaraderie among local chefs that Moore says seems to be what really won the Star Chef's panel over: that Asheville's small-city vibe allows its chefs to play together nicely rather than scathingly compete. "It's kind of like spring training [in baseball] or an all-star game, when all the teams play with each other," said Moore. "You're all on competitive teams, but you're all in the same sport and you are all friends and colleagues. And I'm really proud of that. We have a remarkable food scene here and I think it has a lot to do with a healthy community. You have farmers here who do incredible things and you've got really imaginative and talented chefs who are taking care of that and putting that product on a plate."

The awards also focus on local food artisans, as well as chefs. WNC got nods for Farm & Sparrow's David Bauer, of whom Bruno raved that he produced "probably the best bread I've ever had;" Marshall Hance of Mountain Air Coffee Roasting, whose coffee Bruno described as "total coffee clarity;" and Luke and Walt Dickenson of Wicked Weed Brewing.

Dissen summed it up best; "I've followed Star Chefs for a long time and even just the fact that I was personally nominated for the award, I was excited about. But then the fact that I and so many other people in this area won the award is just amazing. And when you look back on [Star Chef's] website and look at the different chefs that have won these awards, and their names that you recognize, they are chefs that you respect in our national food community. It speaks volumes about what is going on here in Asheville."

And thanks to *Star Chefs*, the rest of the world can now recognize, lust after and pine for what we've been chewing on for so long in our little city.

The [Awards Gala](#) and tasting will be held at Memminger Auditorium in Charleston, S.C. on Wednesday, Dec. 11. The event will feature 21 dish and drink pairings. Tickets start at \$85.