

NIGHT IN A *New Orleans Kitchen*

By Robert Cartwright
Maui Vice Chargé de Presse

ANY MEMBER WILL TELL YOU THAT the Jeunes Commis competition is one of the most important and worthwhile causes that the Chaîne sponsors. Perhaps no one appreciates this program more than Maui Chef Rôtisseur Thomas Selman, owner of the Main Street Bistro in historic Wailuku Town. The Main Street Bistro has been a fine-dining fixture in East Maui for years. On March 1, to the delight of the Maui Chapter, Chef Selman hosted the region's Jeunes Commis competition awards dinner at his venue.

On this night, Chef Selman not only bolstered his reputation as a pre-eminent chef, but he also demonstrated for the young competitors the passion and commitment that one must possess to be a restaurant owner and professional chef. The Main Street Bistro is popular for its tapas-style tasting menu, which allows diners to sample and share a variety of small dishes. Chef Selman stayed with this concept for our event.

The meal began with grilled shrimp over sweet corn grits. A refreshing salad featured local greens with lump crab, heirloom tomatoes, spiced pecans, and grilled watermelon. The third course was Chef Selman's version of the classic "BLT": an open-faced sandwich on which a fried green tomato slice was topped with a bacon-wrapped oyster. Whipped balsamic-beurre blanc sauce enhanced the dish.

Arriving next was Cajun-seared ahi atop dirty rice made with andouille sausage. The entrée was prime short rib étouffée plated with grilled mushroom rice cakes. For dessert, we enjoyed a decadent, velvety rum-cream pie topped with blackened fresh banana.

The young chefs nervously antici-



pated the awards ceremony following dinner. Having had the privilege to serve as one of the competition judges, this writer can honestly say that all four contestants were winners and their final scores were very close. In the end, however, Jonathan Pasion, Carolina Celis-Curtin, and Keaka Lee were awarded bronze stars, while Daniel Umeno was declared the winner. He earned a silver star and the opportunity to move on to the national Jeunes Commis competition in Scottsdale. ☐

1 (Seated) Jeunes Commis contestants Jonathan Pasion, Carolina Celis-Curtin and Keaka Lee; (standing) winner Daniel Umeno.

2 (Seated) Judge/Maui Chef Rôtisseur Dean Louie and (standing) Maui Bailli Werner Boettner, AAC.

3 Chevalier Gene Doo and Celia Doo.

4 Maui Chef Rôtisseur Thomas Selman.

5 Jeunes Commis winner Daniel Umeno.

PHOTOS BY JESSICA PEARL