

FOOD

B.C. chef bound for France's culinary Olympics

Ryan Stone has been training regularly since September for the biennial competition

BY MIA STAINSBY
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Hey, Vancouver. I know you're busy cheering on the Canucks and that's great, but how about this other Canuck? The one in the culinary field.

Team Canada, in the form of chef Ryan Stone, will be competing for gold in the Bocuse d'Or culinary competition in Lyon, France. The biennial competition takes place Jan. 25-26, and is an Olympic calibre competition.

On Wednesday, Stone wrapped up training with his fourteenth five-hour practice run of multi-component

fish and meat platters that he and his assistant will be cooking and assembling during the competition. Stone has been going flat-out for three months, seven days a week, training for the event. "I stopped working at the beginning of September just to focus on the competition. I thought taking the time off work would give me a work-life balance, but this competition is life-consuming. Every day, I'm meeting suppliers, getting custom tools and presentation vessels made, tweaking recipes."

He's had glassware made, shaped specifically for a terrine and a cauliflower mousse. Some elements on the platters call for molecular gastronomy

techniques requiring precision and a multitude of tweaks. "There's a lot of measuring, achieving the right viscosity and finding the right tenth of a gram in measurements. There are a huge number of components on the platter, so you have to be disciplined and document every change you make."

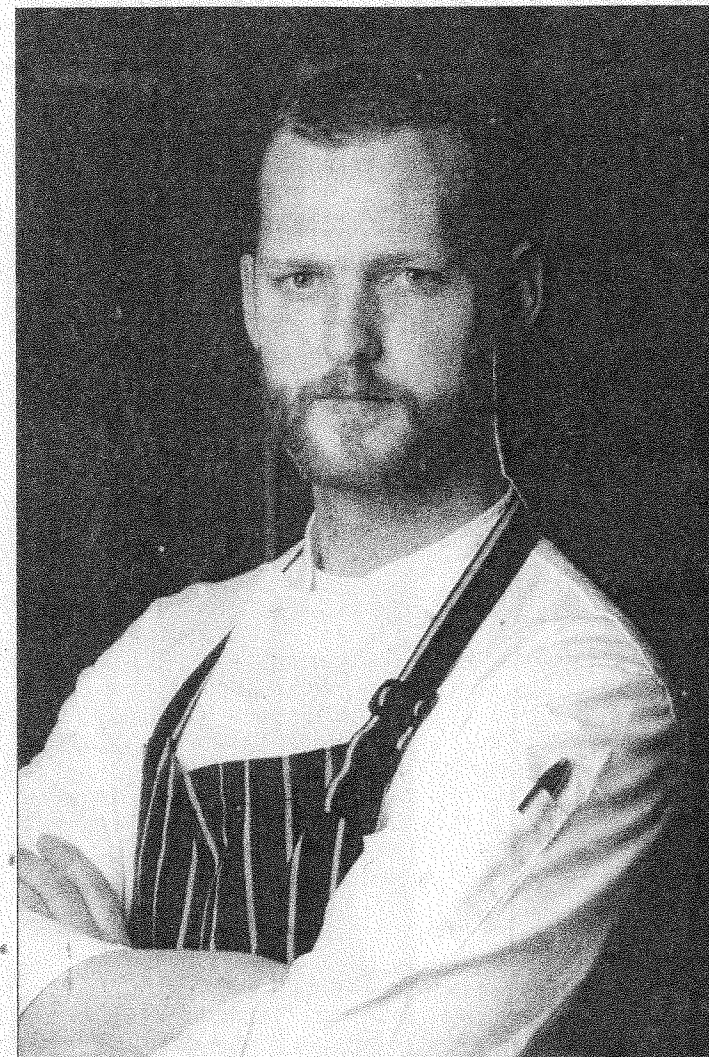
The five-hour competition, he feels, does require Olympian effort. "It's a sprint for five hours and we're using more energy than you'd realize. You have to be precise and focused. The mental and physical exertion is huge."

Even the fundraising is Olympian. "What we're undertaking is huge and we raised over \$300,000 to do this." Moxie's, a chain restaurant, has been a major sponsor for the last couple of years.

His fish platter, he says, will feature kulen (sausage) wrapped monkfish; Scottish crab and dashi terrine; langoustine and tomato gel; pea and bacon tart; caviar and cauliflower mousse.

The meat platter features herb and mustard-wrapped lamb; lamb steak and kidney sausage; sweetbread and potato tart; sunchoke and truffle marrow; golden beet with eggplant and pine nuts.

Competing in the Bocuse d'Or has been his dream since high school, says the 28-year-old. "It has personal significance. I started cooking in high school [he grew up in Maple Ridge]. One of the first things I remember is seeing a video of Robert Sulatycky competing



Ryan Stone has dreamed of the competition since high school.

for Canada in 1999. My chef instructor told me it was the competition where the best chef in the world wins. I thought 'One day, I need to get there.'

In his working life, Stone sought positions with chefs

who have competed or were interested in the Bocuse competition and kept his goal burning bright. Stone is employed during the summer season at the luxury West Coast Fishing Club on Haida Gwaii.

During the competition, judges reserve 40 points for taste, 15 for presentation and five for representing the cuisine of the competitor's country.

Chefs are allowed a young assistant and Stone's is Talib Hudda, an apprentice at Pear Tree restaurant in Burnaby. Pear Tree owner/chef Scott Jaeger was Canada's 2007 Bocuse d'Or contender and is Stone's training mentor. Stone was an apprentice in the 2005 competition.

This year, 24 competing countries were winnowed from 60 in qualifying competitions. So far, the North American "best" is fourth place and that was B.C.'s Robert Sulatycky (who now works in L.A.)

All Canadian contenders have been from B.C. and that, Stone feels, has to do with Vancouver being a cook's city. "Chefs are willing to share recipes and teach trade secrets more than any place in the world here."

He was feeling tired after his last training session and he's expecting a few jangled nerves.

"It's an eight-hour time difference, but jet lag won't be a factor," he says.

"The nerves will start to pick up but the minute we wake up on the 19th [when he arrives in Lyon] to when we finish. Adrenalin will take over."

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SEE VIDEO OF RYAN STONE'S FINAL TRAINING SESSION AT VANCOUVERSUN.COM/LIFESTYLE