

# NIAGARA SINCE 1854 GAZETTE

## **BEST CHEFS: Niagara chefs sought for Nickel City competition**

--December 15, 2009

By Michele DeLuca



Christa Glennie Seychew of Feed Your Soul and Tom Tower of the Tom Tower Market discuss fresh vegetable choices. Seychew, who runs culinary tours for chefs and foodies, is seeking Niagara region chefs for her Iron Chef-style cooking competition.

12/15/2009 Niagara Gazette, photo by James Neiss

The Nickel City Chefs are throwing down the gauntlet to Niagara region chefs.

The regional cooking competition, featuring four of Western New York's premier chefs, is seeking applications from chefs in the Niagara Region to compete in upcoming events.

The contest was created by a woman who has already spent some time promoting the Niagara region.

Christa Glennie Seychew led several tours to the Niagara region late last summer, as part of her business Feed Your Soul.

"Feed Your Soul's overall goal is to showcase farms and food. The fact is that culinary tourism and agri-tourism are the two fastest growing areas of tourism in the world right now," she said. Last summer's tours included one with professional chefs another with those interested in the subject of

locally grown food.

One of the stops on the tours was Tom Tower's farm in Youngstown, where she said visitors were charmed by Tom Tower. "He's Cornell educated, the only farmer I've ever known who will quote Keats in the field to you," she said, noting that Tower enlightened her tours on the micro-climates of Niagara which make the area so unique for farming. "It was really an exciting experience for all of the people who went there."

The tours also went to Arrowhead Spring Vineyard to examine the bio-dynamic wine making techniques being used there. As a result, "there were 30-some chefs along, almost all of whom now have Arrowhead wine on their menus."

Seychew clearly understands the current trend of eating locally grown foods for the healthiest, most environmentally sound, most interesting dining.

Now Seychew is seeking a Niagara region presence in her upcoming cooking competition, called Nickel City Chef.

Chefs who sign up to compete against four Nickel City chefs in a cooking competition, similar to the "Iron Chef" television show.

"Our first season was really tremendously "over the moon" popular," said Seychew, "We certainly didn't anticipate in June that we would sell out our tickets for every month through September in three days."

The events, held at Artisan Kitchens and Baths in Buffalo, typically attracted audiences of about 200 who were served upscale treats as they watched the chefs compete.

Chefs are given one hour to make three dishes using a secret ingredient along with food available in the Nickel City chef's pantry.

"It's not really about who is the best chef overall, it's who is the best chef with the secret ingredient," said Seychew, who added that typical secret ingredients are locally chosen foods, including such items as Spar's Sausage, from an artisan sausage shop in Buffalo or yogurt and cream from the White Cow Dairy in East Otto.

The first Nickel City competitions only involved two chefs outside the city of Buffalo. Seychew is seeking chefs from throughout Western New York for this season's competition. Chefs have to be currently employed in an area restaurant. They will compete in the new year against the Nickel City team of chefs, including:

--Adam Goetz, chef/owner of Sample, a Buffalo restaurant with a contemporary approach of providing bite-size samples of all menu items, with dishes that focuses on seasonal flavors and local produce.

--Paul Jenkins, executive chef and managing partner of Tempo, an upscale modern eatery in downtown Buffalo.

--JJ Richert, chef and owner of Torches, a restaurant known for whimsical and adventurous twists on the classics.

--Krista Van Wagner, chef and owner of Curly's Grill in Lackawanna, a fine dining establishment with a penchant for Caribbean flavors.

More information about tickets or applications for Nickel City Chef, as well as the Feed Your Soul tours, can be found on the website: [nickelcitychef.com](http://nickelcitychef.com).