



Nickel City Chef Plates Up the City's Best

By: Lauren Newkirk Maynard

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Left to right: **Chef Adam Goetz** of *Sample*, **Chef Paul Jenkins** of *Tempo*, **Chef JJ Richert** of *Torches*, **Chef Krista Van Wagner** of *Curly's*.

Every city has its icons, and Buffalo is no exception. The venerable chicken wing being one of them, yes, but at the Nickel City Chef cooking competition this weekend, you'll see nary a wing feather, celery stick, or side of blue cheese.

What you and the rest of a live audience will see starting this Sunday, and running through the summer, is a Buffalonian take on the Food Network's zany *Iron Chef* cooking competitions.

And it's not a bad way to spend an afternoon: get a complimentary drink and finger food served up by SeaBar's Mike Andrzejewski, sit back and watch our city's best chefs battle it out for a chance to redefine our region's cuisine.

"Nickel City Chef is here to elevate our perceptions of ourselves and where we land on the culinary map," says Christa Glennie Seychew, the event's organizer and founder of Feed Your Soul Buffalo, which arranges local food adventures and helps celebrate our region's edibles.

By putting talented chefs front-and-center, Seychew says, Nickel City Chef gives them the opportunity to experiment with difficult dishes they might be reluctant to put on their menu rotation. It also exposes the public to new ideas, whether that's using local ingredients from Western New York's rich agricultural region in everyday (and not-so-everyday) cooking, or investing in the local economy through our bellies and palates.

Just like *Iron Chef*, Nickel City will provide two chefs and their assistants with a secret ingredient (locally sourced), which must then be used in three dishes, prepared in just one hour. You, as an audience member, will get to help judge the best dishes—and “top chef” in the Queen City.

Guest judges will include “mystery judges” at two of the competitions, local food bloggers, magazine editors, and media personalities, as well as a “lucky audience member” on September 20. Fittingly enough, the magic happens in two professional kitchen setups at Artisan Kitchens and Baths, located in a former stove factory on the West Side.

The Nickel City Chef series is nearly sold out, but here’s the skinny in case you’re getting hungry:

June 21 (Father’s Day)—Nickel City Chef **Krista Van Wagner** (Curly’s) v. Challenging Chef **Brian Mietus** (Bacchus Wine Bar and Restaurant).

July 19—Nickel City Chef **JJ Richert** (Torches) v. Challenging Chef **Joseph Fenush III** (Park Country Club)

August 23—Nickel City Chef **Paul Jenkins** (Tempo) v. Challenging Chef **Bruce Wieszala** (Verbena)

September 20—Nickel City Chef **Adam Goetz** (Sample) v. Challenging Chef **Kate Elliott** (Juniper)