



## PRESS RELEASE



Chef Leif Eric Benson, CEC, AAC was presented with the 2012 Culinary Excellence Award at the Washington Oregon Potato Conference 2012. The award was a limited edition lithograph of a Premier Potato illustration painted by Jeanne Debons and was awarded by both Bill Brewer, President CEO of the Oregon Potato Commission and Chris Voigt, Executive Director of the Washington State Potato Commission. This award was presented in honor of Chef Benson's tireless efforts and delicious creations that have helped the Oregon and Washington Potato Commissions promote the humble Pacific Northwest spud domestically, as well as, internationally for more than two decades.

As a true pioneer of Pacific Northwest Cuisine, Chef Benson has developed innovative preparations of specialty potatoes grown in Oregon and Washington, suitable for the most discerning palates and has literally traveled the globe, sharing his techniques with resorts and five-star hotel industry professionals. As a culinary consultant and guest Chef, he literally stirs up interest in a vegetable that is frequently taken for granted. His interest in tuber variations in density, color, texture, aroma and flavor have given birth to the Potato Terroir projects currently being developed by the Oregon Potato Commission.

Chef Benson not only serves on the Advisory Board of Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts, he has shared his love of the gentle nuances in flavor the potato can bring to a meal, with the students and staff there. He has performed countless demonstrations and has personally introduced Chefs (and future Chefs) to growers on farm tours orchestrated with Le Cordon Bleu.

He has not only graced the tables of several governors, he has won over dignitaries from many countries, with his skill and talent. Only three years ago, he prepared a magnificent seven course meal, (creatively using potatoes in every course), which wooed the highest Russian Agricultural Officials into wanting more PNW potatoes. That evening resulted in a ground breaking potato trade agreement between the United States and Russia dubbed "Timberline Accord."

Chef Benson's accolades and list of contributions toward the promotion of potatoes goes on and on. The 2012 Culinary Excellence Award is just one more nod to this great man's illustrious career.



Photo by Bruce Beaton Photography

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