

PLAN AHEAD FOR A GRAND FATHER'S DAY AFFAIR

THE 30TH-ANNIVERSARY Food & Wine Classic is officially sold out. If you weren't able to get tickets or preferred not to shell out the money

for the high-priced pass, hope is not lost for regional foodies.

This Father's Day, bring your favorite bacon-lovin' father, dad, son, boyfriend, et al, to the ultimate pork competition in the country — Grand Cochon in Aspen.

This finale event, which takes place at Hotel Jerome on June 17, is the culmination of a 10-city regional competition where savvy chefs and their kitchens take a whole heritage-breed hog and create a pork-centric menu. Think Food & Wine Classic Grand Tasting — reserve wines, top chefs, artisan cocktails, regional beers, butcher demos — but smaller, cheaper (tickets start at \$125) and all focused on pork, including pig-infused desserts. Is this not every man's dream?

While the event is known for its party atmosphere and truly virtuosic dishes, the story behind Cochon is even cooler. According to Brady Lowe, founder of regional Cochon555 and the finale event in Aspen, Grand Cochon, the entire point of this competition is to promote heritage pigs and breed diversity in local and national communities. It is the only heritage breed pig culinary competition in the U.S.

"The main thing is," he says, "it's for a good cause. It speaks to local food and inspires to keep eating in the right direction."

Each competing chef sources his or her own adolescent whole pig or a mature split hog, which provides a great opportunity for attendees to try pork from around the country and learn the nuances of how they were raised, what they were fed and how



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they taste. Many of the chefs also bring the regional pig farmers along for the Grand Cochon ride.

"The success of Cochon 555 and Grand Cochon is attributed to one thing: flavor," Lowe says. "Four years ago (when the competition began), we set out on a mission to create a national conversation around heritage pigs and responsible agriculture, and today we celebrate with the greatest culinary event in

the country — the 30th anniversary of Food & Wine Classic in Aspen. It's an honor to be there and an honor to feed the foodies, the influencers, educators and celebrated icons of our national food community."

At the end of the night, the judges panel of food experts and culinary stars, along with the audience, choose a winner.

So who will win the crown and be this year's "king or queen of porc"?

The caliber of competing chefs so far for the 2012 Grand Cochon title is exceptional. Regional winners include "The Next Iron Chef" winner Marc Forgione (New York City), Culinary Institute of America instructor Lars Kronmark (Napa, Calif.), 2009 Food & Wine Best New Chef nominee Kelly English (Memphis, Tenn.),

James Beard Award-winning chef Michelle Bernstein (Miami), Scott Drewno (Washington, D.C.), Jason Vincent (Chicago), and Ben Ford (Los Angeles). A final winner will be selected on May 20 in San Francisco.

So even if you are attending the Classic this year, save some room for Grand Cochon. It promises to be a culinary event worth, pardon the pun, pigging out for.

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GRAND COCHON TICKETS

Tickets for Grand Cochon are \$150 per person for general admission and are available at www.cochon555.com or www.stayaspensnowmass.com. VIP tickets for \$200 include early access to the floor and a private tasting of reserve wines, artisan cheeses, oysters and Black River Caviar. Attendees do not need a Food & Wine Classic in Aspen pass to attend Grand Cochon.



LOVE BACON?

The latest flavor "Have Bacon Will Travel," from Carbondale-born Too Haute Cowgirls confectionary popcorn, earned a nomination for the Innovative New Product Award at the annual Sweets and Snacks Expo in Chicago this month. The concoction consists of maple-pecan-butter-crunch popcorn with hickory-smoked bacon and a milk-chocolate drizzle. Buy a bag at The Cheese Shop in Aspen or www.toohautecowgirls.com.