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Chef Alex Zhong of Asia Wins Silver in International Chinese Culinary Competition

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The inaugural “World Chinese Culinary Competition” hosted by NTDTV drew a conclusion on Wednesday, November 19, at the Peking Hunan Park Chinese restaurant at 100 Park Avenue in Manhattan, New York. At the award banquet that evening, winners of all five categories, Cantonese Cuisine, Northeast Cuisine, Huaiyang Cuisine, Shandong Cuisine, and Sichuan Cuisine, were announced in high expectation of competitors from all over the world. Mr. Alex Zhong, owner and chef of Asia Restaurant in Allentown, Pennsylvania, was Silver Place Winner in the Northeast Cuisine category. He was the only winner from Pennsylvania.

According to the Organizing Committee of the competition, First Place Winners will walk away with \$10,000 in cash prize, the prize for Second Place is \$3,000, and \$1,000 for Third Place. All winners in all the categories get a trophy and a certificate. This inaugural culinary competition is said to be extremely competitive with high standards for the entrants. First Place seats in Cantonese, Northeast, Huaiyang, and Sichuan are all unfilled, with only Chef Chen Yongming of New York walking away with First Place award in the Shandong category. Even though Alex Zhong was second place in Northeast cuisine category, because the First Place seat is empty, he was in fact the number one in Northeast Cuisine category in this world competition.

The required dishes for the Northeast category were “Shredded Pork with Dried Bean Curd” for the preliminary round of the competition, and “Hot Pepper with Tofu and Pork” for the final round. The optional entry by Alex Zhong for the preliminary round was “Jade Mushroom and Phoenix Shrimp”, and he had “Golden Thread & Phoenix Nest” for the final round.

Allentown is to the north of Philadelphia, where Chef Alex Zhong has been a well known Chinese chef in the area and in greater Philadelphia Chinese community as well. He was State-certified as “National Chef Special Class II” in China, an extremely rare honor to only a handful of executive chefs of the highest distinction. In China, nationally-certified chefs are like distinguished scientists, who receive a special stipend

from the government for their contribution. In addition, Alex Zhong also served as Executive Chef at a Summer Resort in China and its General Manager later on. As the only Pennsylvanian winner of NTDTV's world competition, the Chinese communities throughout Pennsylvania regard him as their jewel pride.

At Asia, Alex's restaurant in Allentown, a home-style dish called "Sauerkraut Pork with Napa & Rice Noodle in Clay Pot", is a true winner and extremely popular among Chinese customers of his eatery. Other dishes, such as Fillet of Grouper in Ginger Sauce, Thai Basil Chicken and Shrimp, Plum Chicken, Cilantro Heart and Abalone, Golden Thread & Phoenix Nest (his wining entry), Dragon Cloud and Sea Cucumber, etc, are also very authentic and delicious, and are oftentimes available only if you special order them in advance.

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