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 SUBJECT: Inmates whip up winning spring dishes



Prison officers look on as two of the 12 finalists put the finishing touches on their dish during the cooking competition. ST PHOTO: STEPHANIE YEOW

Inmates whip up winning spring dishes

By CHERYL ONG

AN INMATE with a panache for food led his team to victory at the Yellow Ribbon Cooking Competition finals yesterday.

The 42-year-old, formerly a chef at a seafood restaurant, represented Khalsa Crescent Prison to help design the winning line-up of dishes for the cook-off, first held in 2007, that used a fixed list of spring-time ingredients as its theme.

"I'm very glad that we won because I spent many sleepless nights thinking about how to get over the challenge of the limited ingredients," he said in Mandarin.

For their winning dinner, the team pre-

pared a seared salmon and squid appetiser, stuffed chicken thighs with mixed herbs for the main course, followed by a delectable banana tart for dessert.

The competition, a collaboration between the Yellow Ribbon Project and Shatec Institutes, took place over three weeks and involved about 40 inmates, chosen for their interest in cooking and aptitude for learning new skills.

The competition - held at Changi Prison - aims to teach inmates skills that let them contribute to society in a meaningful way upon their release, said Deputy Superintendent of Prisons Ng Gee Tiong, also chairman of the competition committee.

Chefs at Shatec, a hospitality school, taught the inmates, who come from both the men and women's prisons, the basics of cooking. Competition judge and trainer Catan Tan, 42, said he was most impressed by the winning team's creative use of ingredients to fit the spring theme.

While a cash prize of \$150 is given to each member in the winning team, the prize most anticipated is a chance for the 12 finalists to each dine with three members of their family and friends.

Said a 36-year-old participant whose team came in second: "I'm really look forward to cooking for my loved ones. It's very hard to get such a chance in prison."