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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Culinary Team Canada once again based in Alberta**

*Edmonton...* Team tryouts are being held in Edmonton on the weekend of January 8–10. Two qualifying competitions, at the Shaw Conference Centre and NAIT, will see six chefs from across the country selected to represent Canada at the premier international level.

“Culinary Team Canada was based out of Alberta from 1998 to 2001 and everyone I’ve been in touch with so far is very excited, and proud, to again be involved with Canada’s national team,” says Simon Smotkowicz, executive chef at the Shaw Conference Centre and returning team manager.

The Alberta Culinary Arts Foundation (ACAF), under Smotkowicz’s direction, has been given the mandate by the Canadian Culinary Federation to manage Culinary Team Canada until the 2012 World Culinary Olympics.

“It’s kind of like figure skating,” Smotkowicz says. “The first competition is a little more fun. Chefs prepare cold dishes, which are for display only. The second one is more technical and involves preparing hot food — six appetizers and six main dishes — that judges taste and assess.”

The Alberta Livestock and Meat Agency (ALMA) is providing \$300,000 to ACAF over the next three years. Smotkowicz says this funding will help pay for team essentials such as transportation and practices, which are held every six weeks.

A key mission of Culinary Team Canada is to foster awareness of and promote Canadian food products. “Being from Alberta, meat, predominantly from right here, has always been part of our competition menu,” says Smotkowicz, “so it’s especially fitting to have ALMA come on as the team’s first major partner.”

“ALMA’s funding goes a long way toward setting the team on a firm foundation,” Smotkowicz says. “When you have chef members from around the country, transportation and meeting costs can definitely add up. But getting together is critical in building an elite culinary team.”

ALMA president and CEO Gordon Cove sees this funding as very much a part of the agency’s mandate.

“It’s definitely aligned with our goal of increasing demand for Alberta meat products by bringing these products to the global stage of culinary competition,” Cove says. “Not only are we showing what the chefs in Alberta and Canada can do but we’re also showing what our meat products can do.”

Culinary Team Canada Manager Smotkowicz echoes that pride: “The culinary talent and quality products we have here are some of the best anywhere. We have a lot to show the rest of the world.”

For more information, contact:

Simon Smotkowicz, CCFCC Culinary Chair – (780) 917-7617

Gen Handley, Alberta Livestock and Meat Agency – (780) 638-1933