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FOOD EDITORS RELEASE

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Persistence Meets Passion in Wild Rice Competition

After years of fan-favorite wins, contestant captures top title while middle schooler from Minnesota steals hearts with his wild rice pinwheels

The Minnesota Cultivated Wild Rice Council has announced the winners of its annual “*Get Wild with Wild Rice*” recipe contest. Laura Kurella of Wellston, MI, claimed the Grand Prize for her bold and flavorful *Wildly Robust Beans & Rice Birria Bites*, while 13-year-old Cameron Miller of Blaine, MN, earned the People’s Choice Award for his *Minnesota Wild Rice Turkey Pinwheels*.

Laura, a self-taught home cook and long-time wild rice enthusiast, was stunned to finally hear her name announced as the Grand Prize winner after three consecutive years as the People’s Choice award recipient. “I couldn’t believe it,” Laura said. “It literally took a few beats for it to finally sink in. I was simply stunned by the news!”

Laura first entered the “*Get Wild with Wild Rice*” recipe contest in 2021 after encouragement from a close friend and Minnesota native, and over the years she’s become a beloved name among wild rice fans for her imaginative recipes. Laura believes that the food we eat should nourish and heal and likes incorporating wild rice into her dishes as it is a balanced food source, providing a healthy mix of protein and fiber with relatively low calories compared to brown and white rice.

This year’s People’s Choice Award went to Cameron Miller, an aspiring young chef who impressed voters with his flavorful and easy Minnesota Wild Rice Turkey Pinwheels. Miller was inspired to enter the contest after watching the Council’s cooking demonstrations at the Minnesota State Fair. He took every opportunity to share his recipe, sampling at his school, and at his parents’ workplaces, earning the votes of those who got to taste his creation.

Laura won the People’s Choice award for the three previous years and is very glad to be sharing the spotlight with a youth contender. “I am genuinely so happy for Cameron! It’s so important for kids to learn how to make food from scratch. It builds confidence, connection, and healthy eating habits. His excitement about cooking uplifts me and I can’t wait to see where his skills take him,” Laura said.

Cameron is very excited to step into the spotlight for a recipe he developed himself. “I like trying new things and learning how to make different kinds of food,” he said. “This was a fun way to share something I made with a lot of people. I am so glad people liked it!”

Grand Prize Winner – Wildly Robust Beans & Rice Birria Bites (Laura Kurella, Wellston, MI)

This recipe turns leftover meats into something extraordinary. *Wildly Robust Beans & Rice Birria Bites* layers tender, shredded meats with smoky chipotle, salsa, and hearty wild rice, all wrapped in a warm tortilla. It’s a bold, flavor-packed finger food perfect for sharing or savoring solo.

People’s Choice Winner – Minnesota Wild Rice Turkey Pinwheels (Cameron Miller, Blaine, MN)

This recipe brings fresh energy to a crowd-pleasing classic. Minnesota Wild Rice Turkey Pinwheels blend cream cheese, mesquite turkey, bacon, cranberries, and wild rice, rolled in a soft spinach wrap. This fun appetizer is easy to make, easy to share, and impossible to resist.

The Council's latest recipe brochure, *Minnesota Cultivated Wild Rice Recipes & Answers to Frequently Asked Questions*, features contest winning recipes including soups, salads, sides, entrées, and even a dessert. To receive your free copy, send a self-addressed-stamped-envelope to: Minnesota Cultivated Wild Rice Council, Newest Recipes, 4630 Churchill St #1, St. Paul, MN 55126.

Wildly Robust Beans & Rice Birria Bites

Laura Kurella, Wellston, MI

- 1 yellow onion, minced
- 1 tbsp butter
- ¼ cup canola oil
- 1½ cups cooked wild rice
- 1 can (7 oz) chipotle peppers in adobo sauce
- 1 jar (16 oz) salsa
- 1 cup chicken bone broth
- 1 can (15.5 oz) red beans
- 1½ lbs cooked and shredded (any combo): beef chuck roast, pork shoulder, and turkey breast
- pure maple syrup, to taste
- soft corn tortillas, lightly pan toasted
- roasted bell pepper, red onion, lime wedges, garnish

In large skillet, sauté onion in butter and oil until caramelized. Stir in wild rice; reduce heat to low. In blender, combine chipotle peppers in adobo sauce, salsa, and broth. Puree until very smooth. Stir puree and beans into skillet. Evenly divide wild rice mixture into separate skillets for each meat; stir in meat(s). Heat and stir until sauce becomes pasty. Add syrup. Serve in tortillas; garnish. 6 servings.

Minnesota Wild Rice Turkey Pinwheels

Cameron Miller, Blaine, MN

- 16 oz cream cheese, softened
- 2 tsp taco seasoning
- 2 cups cooked wild rice, warmed
- 8 oz mesquite turkey deli slices, finely chopped
- 8 oz shredded triple cheddar cheese
- ½ cup dried cranberries
- ½ cup cooked and crumbled bacon
- 4 large spinach tortilla wraps
- ½ cup sliced green onion

In large bowl, mix cream cheese and taco seasoning. Stir in next five ingredients. Spread mixture evenly over tortillas. Place line of green onion in middle of tortilla; roll tortillas towards onion. Wrap in plastic wrap; refrigerate. Cut each into eight slices. 8 servings.

Note to Editor:

For a high-resolution electronic copy of the photos, call or email our office.

Due to limited funds, we are unable to utilize a clipping service. Run our release and send us a copy — we'll return the favor by sending you some wild rice. If you cannot accept the wild rice, we'd still appreciate a clipping to show our growers — ***thanks!***

Readers responding to the brochure offer receive a "Mail Order Supplier" list along with the 2025-2026 *Minnesota Cultivated Wild Rice Recipes and Answers to Often Asked Questions* brochure. Readers should send a business size self-addressed-stamped-envelope to:

Minnesota Cultivated Wild Rice Council

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Wildly Robust Beans & Rice Birria Bites

Credit: Minnesota Cultivated Wild Rice Council



Minnesota Wild Rice Turkey Pinwheels

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