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Perry creates prize-winning recipes

CATHY WILSON
 Staff Writer

A Perquimans County woman has been named a grand prize winner in a national recipe contest featuring Asian frozen food.

Cheryl Perry, who lives on Body Road, is one of five grand prize winners in the Kahiki Foods Asian Inspirations Recipe Contest which ended in November. Her original creation, Ancho Sesame Orange Chicken Pot Pie, won her a year's supply of Kahiki frozen foods.

"I like to think outside the box," said Perry in describing how she creates her unique recipes that have won not only this contest but many others as well.

In this contest, Perry combines her love of chili peppers and southwestern cooking with the quality and completeness of Kahiki's Sesame Orange Chicken to create a home baked pot pie that is not only tasty and attractive, but quick and easy, too.

She combined one package of Kahiki's Sesame Orange Chicken with mandarin orange segments, sesame seeds, and ancho chili powder to create the filling which is then poured into a pot pie molded by two unbaked pie crusts. The

end result is a flaky, filling one dish meal ready to eat in about 40 minutes.

To complement the dish, Perry adds a large tossed salad highlighted with fresh mushrooms and sliced kiwis.

In celebration of National Frozen Food Month, contest entrants were asked to submit one recipe that combined any variety of Kahiki Foods products with additional ingredients, exploring the numerous spices, flavorings, and ingredients that go into making a quality dish.

"We were asked to use one of their products and

to give it a smoky flavor," she said.

Ancho chili powder, spicy but without the high heat, is ground dried poblano peppers that produce a fruity flavor with a subtle heat that arrives almost as an after thought. It is grown in Mexico and is usually used in Mexican and southwestern cooking.

"I didn't put a lot of the ancho chili powder in there because I didn't want to overpower the orange," she added.

Other grand prize winners in the Kahiki Foods contest hailed from California, Mississippi, Colorado, and Florida. Their recipes included General Tso's Asian Loaf, Bottled Rockets, Pacific Rim Pizza, and Stuffed Green Peppers.

Although she has earned two business degrees, Perry's passion is cooking and creating exciting recipes involving good food. Although from New York, she learned how to cook, garden and can food from her grandmother in rural Warrenton.

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I'm obsessed about cooking. I actually dream about creating recipes.



A HINT OF HEAT and the sweetness of mandarin orange combine to make Cheryl Perry's ancho sesame orange chicken pot pie a real taste treat. The recipe can be found a www.kahiki.com.

put a different twist on it. I love using different chili powders. I knew that orange and peppers go together, so I used the ancho chili powder

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about creating recipes. My mind is always on the next recipe contest," she said, looking at her refrigerator door where the list of ingredients needed for the next recipe contest is posted.

Perry has entered recipe contests for the past eight years. She subscribes to an online contests newsletter that notifies her of upcoming contests around the nation. She has won numerous times, earning her free appliances, food, and cash.

Her largest cash winnings, so far, was \$8,000, won in 2007 when her ancho orange glazed chicken with toasted walnuts and sweet potato hash took the grand prize in the IGA grocery store cook-off in Chicago.

In 2008, Perry estimates she entered about 100 recipe contests and won 20-25 of them. Among her winnings were free ice cream for a year and an ice cream freezer from Blue Bunny for her prize-winning ice cream torte recipe featuring peanut butter ice cream, fresh baked cookies, toffee-flavored whipped cream and nuts.

Of all the contests she



Perquimans Weekly photos by CATHY WILSON

CHERYL PERRY SHOWS OFF her beautiful and delicious prize-winning ancho sesame orange chicken pot pie.

has entered, the one that has brought her the most notoriety is the contest that landed her on the Food Network's Ultimate Recipe Showdown 2 which started airing in January. The hometown favorite segment that features Perry is slated to air Feb. 15.

She was flown to New York last September where she prepared her prize-winning recipe of seafood stuffed trout with citrus butter drizzle with a side of sweet potato hash browns.

She and three other contestants competed in makeshift kitchens for the grand prize of \$25,000.

How did she do?

"I can't tell you," she said. "It's against the rules. But, I didn't do badly. You'll just have to tune in to find out!"

She likes to compete, and her goal is to win.

"I think my stuff is good," she smiled, "but you never know what the judges are looking for. I try to put together ingredients that most people wouldn't think to put together."

She creates by trial and error, drawing on her own tastes and dislikes. She starts with small batches and,

when satisfied with the end results, creates a meal for family or friends for the real taste-test.

"I like to get people to give me their feedback," she said.

She enjoys sharing her recipes as long as she knows they are good. In this digital age, she stores her original recipes in computer files rather than in a kitchen recipe box crammed full of her culinary creativity.

Cooking and creating can get pretty messy, and Perry works her magic in a very small kitchen with no dishwasher so clean up is part of the job.

"As long as I make something that's satisfying, I don't mind it," she said.

Perry's Ancho Sesame Orange Chicken Pot Pie recipe can be found at www.kahiki.com.

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