

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ontario's finest meat processors take home top honours

Guelph, ON – February 23, 2009 – From turkey kielbassa to a prime rib sausage, Ontario's Finest Meat Competition winners were announced at a gala awards evening on February 21st, 2009 as part of the Ontario Independent Meat Processors (OIMP) annual conference. More than 100 premium meat or poultry products were submitted for a chance to be crowned in one of twelve categories, and judging took place in January.

Competitors showcased their goods in the following categories: Ham, Country Style Bacon, Coiled, Cold Cuts, Deli Roasts, Fermented Sausage, Premium Dry Cured, Fresh Sausage, Cooked and/or Smoked Sausage, Innovative Product, Home Meal Replacement, and Homegrown Ontario™ Beef Steak.

"Hosted by the Ontario Independent Meat Processors, the Ontario Finest Meat Competition is intended to promote the innovative, high quality products that Ontario's meat processors have to offer," said Laurie Nicol, executive director, OIMP. "We hope this competition educates consumers and retailers on the quality and variety of Ontario meat and poultry products."

Entries were evaluated by food industry professionals and media including: Chris Borg, butcher, Bruno's Fine Foods; Charles Bruce-Thompson, culinary professional; Jason Garforth, meat manager, Starsky Foods; Mike Gionfriddo, meat buyer, Michael-Angelo's; Darlene King, food editor, Harrowsmith Country Living; Nicole Young, chef and food writer; and Margaret Webb, author and journalist.

Judging criteria was based on taste, aroma, texture, consumer and visual appeal, and the top three entries from each category were selected based on the judges' combined scores. The Platinum winners of the 2009 Ontario Finest Meat Competition are as follows:

- *Paisanella Salami*, **Bona Foods**, Toronto, ON
- *Authentic Greek Chicken Gyros Cone*, **D & D Poultry**, Toronto, ON
- *Prosciutto*, **Florence Meats**, Oakville, ON
- *Franz's Own Country Style Ham*, **Franz's Butcher Shop**, Peterborough, ON
- *Porketta*, **Halenda's Fine Foods**, Oshawa, ON
- *Turkey Kielbassa*, **Schinkel's Legacy**, Chatham, ON
- *Jalapeno & Cheddar Smoked Sausage*, **Schinkel's Legacy**, Chatham, ON
- *Montreal Smoked Bacon*, **Stemmler Meats & Cheese Inc.**, Heidelberg, ! ON
- *Bacon*, **Townsend Butchers**, Simcoe, ON
- *Chicken Pot Pie*, **VG Meats**, Simcoe, ON
- *Prime Rib Sausage*, **The Village Kitchen**, Markham, ON
- *Ontario's Pride Strip Loin Steak*, **West Grey Premium Beef**, Durham, ON

Each Platinum winner will have their product featured in a recipe developed by Chef Nicole Young, and each recipe will be photographed and promoted in the 2010 OIMP 30th Anniversary Calendar.

VG Meats took home the top prize, the 2009 Ron Usborne Award of Excellence, after accumulating the highest overall score in the competition. Owner Cory Van Groningen accepted the award on behalf of VG Meats and was delighted with the win. "We couldn't be happier," said Groningen. "We put forth our best products and were confident in their quality and obviously the judges agreed."

The contest was promoted to meat processors across Ontario through public relations, marketing, direct mailings and at www.oimp.ca.

For the full list of Platinum, Gold and Silver winners from the competition, please visit www.ontariomeatproducts.ca.

Ontario Independent Meat Processors

The OIMP is a voluntary, non-profit association founded in 1979 that currently represents 180 of Ontario meat and poultry processors. Ontario's meat and poultry industry contributes over \$6.5 billion to Ontario's economy representing 20% of Ontario_____

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For more information about the 2009 Ontario Finest Meat Competition, or to request photos, please contact:

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