Bernard Chaillot
Vermilion Bureau Editor

ABBEVILLE — The Greater Abbeville-Vermilion Chamber of Commerce stirred up what is set to become an annual fall classic of its own with the inaugural Taste of Vermilion fund-raiser at Magdalen Place downtown.

Some of the best chefs in a renowned dining region slugged it out for the title of “King Cuisine — Vermilion’s Choice Award.” The top honor went to the RiverFront Restaurant, but others came close.

Chamber assistant Ginny Alexander said officials perhaps shouldn’t have been surprised that a sumptuous layout from culinary all-stars would draw 300 people, “but you never know what will click with people until you try it. Everything just worked out beautifully.”

More than 250 diners cast votes for their favorites. RiverFront partners Jenny LeBlanc, Brian Rush and Craig Baudoin’s lineup of corn and crab bisque, crabmeat au gratin and seafood enchiladas wowed most of the crowd, but Lynn G’s Seafood and Steakhouse and Shucks Louisiana House of Seafood weren’t far behind.

“The top three were all very close,” Shirley said.

LeBlanc said the RiverFront crew “was really excited. It’s a confirmation for us that people like what we’re doing. The competition was very tough, as we knew it would be. Everyone did a great job.”

Lynn and Connie Goutierrez drew strong diner interest at Thursday’s event with seafood gumbo, Catfish Bourbon and shrimp and crab etouffée, as did Jack Phares with Shucks’ signature corn and crab chowder.

Chefs Bobby and Dot Breaux scored with shrimp and crawfish fettuccine, while Richard’s Seafood Patio Chef Laura LaSalle showcased a near-definitive crawfish etouffée.

Pasta Famiglia’s shrimp scampi, CC’s classic rice dressing, Dupuy’s fried eggplant in a shrimp and tasso herb cream sauce and Park Restaurant’s oysters in the Rockefeller and Bienville styles also did well.

Super Wal-Mart, Super 1 Foods and Golden Corral provided desserts. Marcello’s, Philippe Simon Wine Cellars, Glazer Wholesale and Pelican Distributors, all of Lafayette, donated wine for the event, with Marcello’s owner Gene Todaro doing the pouring honors.

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