

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**



**THE GOLDEN ONION**

***New Professional Cooking Competition Showcasing Vidalia® Onions to Debut at the 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Vidalia Onion Festival***

**Vidalia, Georgia, USA (JANUARY 25, 2012)** — Chefs across Georgia will soon reveal new layers of their own talent as well as the versatility of the famous Vidalia® Onion.

The inaugural Golden Onion professional cooking competition will be held on Sunday, April 22, 2012, in Vidalia, Ga., as the official kick-off to the 35th Annual Vidalia Onion Festival. This new professional cooking competition showcases the Vidalia® Onion, Georgia's most exclusive and internationally renowned agricultural treasure, and also offers a new platform for chefs across Georgia to display their skills and creativity.

"We are excited to discover the creative ways that chefs across Georgia utilize Vidalia Onions," said Wendy Brannen, executive director of the Vidalia® Onion Committee. "This event promotes Georgia as the home of the Vidalia Onion and also provides a platform for chefs to show off their skills while demonstrating the versatility and great flavor of Vidalia Onions."

Golden Onion competitors will have one hour to prepare and present a recipe that features Vidalia® Onions. Twelve chefs are able to compete, and have the option to work with one assistant. To be eligible, competitors must be lead chefs (with job titles such as executive chef, chef de cuisine, chef/owner) for a free-standing restaurant in Georgia. Chefs working at restaurants associated with a luxury country club, resort or hotel are also eligible.

Dishes will be judged on the basis of taste, presentation and creativity. Failure to feature the flavor of Vidalia® Onions or making last-minute changes to the recipe that was submitted during the application process may reduce a chef's final score. Judging will be blind.

The First Place champion will be awarded the Golden Onion trophy, an exclusive honor to hold for one year. The trophy must be surrendered the following year to the next winner. The First Place champion will also receive a cash prize of \$500. The second place winner will receive \$250 and the third place winner \$100. All winners will also receive commemorative plaques.

"We're excited about the professional cooking element that the Golden Onion competition adds to the Vidalia Onion Festival," says Ingrid M. Varn, executive director of the Vidalia Area Convention & Visitors Bureau. "This is an exciting opportunity for chefs across Georgia to roll up their sleeves and show us what they can do with our official state vegetable. And we'll make the chefs' recipes available to encourage folks to try new uses for Vidalia Onions at home in

their own kitchens.” Printed booklets featuring all of the competitors’ recipes will be available for purchase for \$10 at the competition and at the 35th Annual Vidalia Onion Festival.

The Golden Onion competition is presented by the Vidalia Onion Festival Committee in cooperation with the Vidalia® Onion Committee, Georgia Department of Economic Development, and the Georgia Restaurant Association. It was conceived by Atlanta-based freelance food and travel writer/editor Hope S. Philbrick, who will serve as one of five judges.

The Golden Onion competition will be held at the Vidalia Community Center, 107 Old Airport Road in Vidalia, Ga. The event is open to the public starting at 12:30 p.m. Advance tickets cost \$5 per person or \$10 at the door. For details visit [www.vidaliaonionfestival.com](http://www.vidaliaonionfestival.com).

### **About the Vidalia Onion Festival**

Celebrating its 35th year in 2012, the Vidalia Onion Festival will be held April 26-29 in Vidalia, Ga. The event has been featured on The Food Network and recognized as one of the “5 Don't-Miss Festivals Across the U.S.” by MSNBC. The four-day festival offers something for everyone, including the Miss Vidalia Onion Pageant, a children’s parade, outdoor music concerts, an arts and crafts festival, street dance, car show, the Kiwanis Onion Run, the Vidalia Onion Festival Rodeo, and the Famous onion eating contest. Come to Vidalia to experience the “whole onion.” For more information, visit [www.vidaliaonionfestival.com](http://www.vidaliaonionfestival.com).

### **About Vidalia® Onions**

Vidalia® Onions are the pioneer of sweet onions and Georgia’s official state vegetable. Grown only in the mild climate and unique soil surrounding Vidalia, Ga., they’re loved by chefs and home cooks throughout the world. Vidalia® Onions are hand-planted and hand-harvested each year, with sweet, juicy bulbs available seasonally from late April to late August. Their mild, sweet taste makes Vidalia® Onions more versatile than stronger onions. And these Georgia sweeties are a low-calorie, fat, cholesterol, and sodium-free way to get a healthy dose of Vitamin C. For more information, visit [www.VidaliaOnion.org](http://www.VidaliaOnion.org).

### **About the Vidalia® Onion Committee**

Because Vidalia® Onions are sweetly unique, farmers were forced to unite and seek legal protection of their crop and its name. Federal Marketing Order No. 955 was established in 1989 to stipulate how and where the crop can be grown and sold. The Vidalia® Onion Committee administers FMO No. 955 and authorizes production research, marketing research and development and marketing promotion programs. This federal protection reinforces Georgia state laws and the Vidalia® trademark. So, you can try to grow a sweet onion elsewhere, but you cannot call it a “Vidalia!” For more information, visit [www.VidaliaOnion.org](http://www.VidaliaOnion.org).

### **About the Georgia Restaurant Association (GRA)**

The GRA’s mission is to serve as the voice for Georgia’s Restaurants in Advocacy, Education and Awareness. The GRA is sanctioned by the National Restaurant Association (NRA) to operate Georgia’s only not-for-profit representing the state’s foodservice industry. From large chains to start-ups, the GRA helps make Georgia a better place for restaurants to do business and helps make restaurants better for Georgia. For more information, visit [www.garestaurants.org](http://www.garestaurants.org).

### **About Georgia Tourism**

Whether visiting for business or on vacation, the Georgia travel experience brings a contemporary and modern feel with the authenticity, heritage and hospitality of the South. From Georgia's energetic and lively cities to the relaxing coastline and breathtaking mountain scenery, Georgia boasts rich and unique experiences that are unparalleled. For more information, visit [www.ExploreGeorgia.org](http://www.ExploreGeorgia.org)

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