

# Dunning's 2nd 'Battle of the Chefs' to support autism work

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Maureen Mader, owner of Dunning's Market in Flossmoor, will host the 2nd Annual Battle of the Chefs on July 9 to benefit those who work at the iCanDream Center.

It follows the 2021 fundraising event she hosted to benefit the center in Tinley Park. It drew more than 180 people and raised nearly \$20,000 for the organization that provides life skills and support for young adults with autism and intellectual disabilities.

The Battle of the Chefs is a cooking competition similar to the structure of the Food Network's "Chopped" reality show. Two cooking teams will have seven mystery ingredients that are not revealed until just before the competition. Contestants will have 45 minutes to incorporate all the ingredients into their dish.

"The dishes are then presented to a judging panel of five judges who vote on who will be the champion," Mader said. "In addition to this, both teams do two heavy appetizers for the guests to enjoy along with the signature cocktail."

As the mother of a son with autism, fundraising for autism awareness is a



Three chefs work on a creation during the 2021 Battle of the Chefs at Dunning's Market.

cause close to her heart.

"In the U.S., every year autistic children who are verbal and nonverbal wander off and are never found. And if they are found it's usually catastrophic," said Mader. After hearing about an unfortunate event last year involving a child with autism in Hammond, Mader started thinking about how little awareness there is surrounding autism and tools that can

help create a better outcome like a GPS tracking device for kids with autism called Angel Sense.

The wheels started turning as she thought about ways she may be able to help bring awareness about autism and the challenges kids and parents touched by autism face.

She'd won a dinner with Chef Jerome Brown as a raffle prize and got to thinking

that she could ask him if he and his team wanted to do a competition. Brown has cooked for a number of celebrities and dignitaries, including Shaquille O'Neal, and authored two books on Southern cuisine. He agreed to help Mader.

"He and two other chefs, Chef Dre and Chef Ricky, do this thing and that's my three versus three (competition)," Mader explained. Mader's team will be three of her sisters. The party starts at 4 p.m. The event will be under a tent at the front of the store at 1050 Sterling Ave. in downtown Flossmoor.

The \$60 event ticket gives guests a delicious experience with tasting bites prepared by each team, signature cocktails, live music from Return 2 Soul and the cooking competition presented by emcee Phil Lee. Tony Fields of The Conservatory Vinyl and Vintage is DJ for the after-party. Among the guest judges will be Val Warner of ABC7's Windy City Live daytime talk show.

Information about tickets is on Dunning's Market Facebook page.

Mader also is seeking sponsorships for the Battle of the Chefs competition. Those interested in donating or becoming a sponsor can reach her at Dunning's Market at 708-799-5151.

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