

## **MAX HARROLD, The Gazette**

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Fresh vegetables, organic fish and a scrappy nun squaring off against a handsome young caterer in a public cook-off.

What more could you ask for on a sunny day in the city? All that was missing at yesterday's culinary contest at the new east-end open-air Frontenac market, on Iberville and Ontario Sts., were large crowds.

Organizers hope word of mouth will draw more people and more vendors to the market, which started last month and operates on Saturdays only.

About 40 people watched the contest between Angèle Rizzardo, 69, an Italian-born nun, cookbook author and TV show host and French-born François-Xavier Dehédin, 30, a caterer and the market's resident chef.

Their pans sizzling with olive oil, the two cooks eyed each other warily as the cook-off got under way with produce from the market's nine kiosks.

"I ordered sun and good produce from the earth," the nun said, as she chopped up some leeks, onions, yellow cucumber, asparagus and garlic flower.

To these, she added salmon.

"I will bless it all with hydromel," she said, as she poured some honey-based alcohol, also known as mead, which legends consider the wine of the gods.

Meanwhile, the tanned Dehédin was more concerned with presentation. "It's summer and I want my guests to travel when they see this," he said.

"Italy, Provence," he added as he composed a plate of sautéed red peppers and nectarines.

"Simple ingredients and a lot of love," he said.

There was no clear winner of the cook-off as onlookers were given servings in paper cones. Claudie Saint-Roch said she preferred Rizzardo's confection because its flavours "were more blended," if not as colourful.

Dehédin's choice of fish was Pacific black cod, a deep-sea fish farmed organically and bought from La Mer, an east-end fish market with a kiosk at the Frontenac market yesterday.

La Mer's kiosk was selling fish for about \$1 less per pound than it sells it at the store.

Alex Melatakos, 18, who manned the fish kiosk, said the low prices were to entice people to "the fresh fish, vacuum-packed and really good to go." Rizzardo said buying produce at the market might cost slightly more in some cases, but it was worth it because of the quality and local provenance.

Rizzardo, a vedette of cooking shows on TVA, TQS and Radio-Canada who is also known simply as Soeur Angèle, said she has witnessed a sea change in Quebecers' eating habits since she arrived from Italy in 1955.

"Back then Quebec cuisine was very different. So much fat. One pound of lard for one pound of beans. Now people have (better) equipment and know-how. We freeze vegetables for use" year-round, she said.

She has made it part of her mission to give people healthy eating tips and bring residents together with local restaurants and food producers.

One option for apartment dwellers is to grow vegetables on their balconies, she said.

"I've got tomatoes, herbs, radishes and shallots" growing on her balcony, she said.

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