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Internationally-acclaimed chef Kevin Cherkas is the only Canadian chef selected to present at the upcoming Madrid Fusión Manila.

Culinary career taking Cherkas around globe

SDSS grad recently opened restaurant in Bali

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Aside from a brief stint delivering papers for the *Optimist*, cooking has been the only job for chef Kevin Cherkas.

As the first and only Canadian chef selected to present at the upcoming Madrid Fusión Manila, the Asian edition of the world's top gastronomic festival, madridfusión, Cherkas has come a long way from his paper route days.

Born and raised in Tsawwassen, the internationally-acclaimed chef was a restless, overexcited teenager when he had his first encounter with cooking. Under the guidance of Julius Pokomandy, his culinary arts teacher at South Delta Secondary, Cherkas discovered a positive way of channeling all that energy.

"He's the most instrumental person to my entire culinary career," said Cherkas. "I just saw so much I liked in him as a

person and I needed to be a part of whatever he was teaching."

With a genuine love for eating, Cherkas was inspired to earn his culinary arts degree from Vancouver Community College and later apprentice at the Metropolitan Hotel where he would receive numerous awards.

In 2001, Cherkas left B.C. for New York City to continue his career at several Michelin-star restaurants. Two years later, his culinary journey would take him to Spain, home of the annual madridfusión, and eventually to Bali, where he has recently opened his own world-renowned restaurant, Cuca.

This year's theme for Madrid Fusión Manila is "The Manila Galleon: East Meets West," fitting for the Tsawwassen chef who's own style of cooking com-

bines Western techniques with fresh, locally sourced ingredients.

Cuca, a Spanish nickname given to his wife by her mother, uses only Indonesian ingredients to create quirky comfort dishes made to be shared.

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KEVIN CHERKAS

"It's like if your grandma went to cooking school," said Cherkas. "Delicious and clever."

The award-winning chef looks forward to expanding Cuca into a second restaurant and to have one of his chefs take over the new location. Cherkas hopes to inspire other young chefs to love what they do by giving them the same experiences that were once given to him.