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**2016 NEIL PERRY LAMINGTON CONTEST
KICKS OFF AUSTRALIA DAY IN ASPEN SNOWMASS**

Celebrity Chef and Aspen Snowmass Ambassador launches celebrations



The invitees head to the table to judge the People's Choice Awards after Neil Perry (far right) has awarded his winner. Photo: Jeremy Swanson.

Aspen Snowmass, Jan. 17, 2016 – This weekend lightly falling snow in downtown Aspen, a suited kangaroo and bottles of Penfolds created the scene for one of the more unusual pre cursors to global Australia Day celebrations as celebrity chef Neil Perry kicked off celebrations with the 2016 Neil Perry Lamington Contest.

Held on the rooftop of the Residences at The Little Nell, part of celebrating all things Australian—a for Aspen Snowmass' top international market saw talented chefs vie for the honor of baking the winning, traditional Australian favorite sweet. For the third consecutive year, Aspen Snowmass Resort Ambassador, Neil Perry AM, presided over a high altitude cook-off; last year

the chefs competed with meat pies, in 2014 Pavlova desserts, and this year Lamingtons, however, Lamingtons with a twist.

“Let’s make it a bit fun this year and really be inspired. Meaning I want the creativity of the valleys chefs to go wild. So the Lamington is to be reinterpreted and there are no holds barred,” said Perry. The only rules were the Lamington must contain sponge, chocolate, coconut and raspberry jam, the four key ingredients in the Australian icon. “Other than that, the sky is the limit”.

Five chefs from top restaurants including The Little Nell, Viceroy Snowmass (both hotels are run by Australian General Managers), Ajax Tavern, Buttermilk Mountain Bakery and 520 Grill presented their Lamington versions to the judges. Baking at high altitude, with the chefs not having prepared or tasted Lamingtons previously, was no easy feat. However, Aspen Snowmass chefs are renowned for their creativity.

Bret Vandermark of Buttermilk Mountain Bakery re-invented the Lamington with a vanilla sponge cake, coconut rum mousse, double choc cream, raspberry coulis and fresh raspberry compote. However, it wasn’t enough to take down the winner, Curtis Cameron of The Little Nell, who believes his Buttermilk sponge pushed him over the line, which was combined with Valrhona chocolate and desiccated coconut. “It was simple”, he said, “but with great ingredients. I also didn’t add raspberry jam, which I believe is highly controversial, but I was willing to take the risk and go out on a limb”.

The Little Nell Managing Director, Australian Simon Chen, said he hadn’t passed his chef any secrets, but the win was fueling a healthy rivalry with his old friend and GM of the Viceroy Snowmass, Australian Hugh Templeman. “Ashley Jenkin of the Viceroy has won the past two years. So now it’s 2 -1, they’re still ahead though!”

On Australia Day proper, celebrations kick off at Aspen Mountain with the Silver Queen Gondola opening one hour early at 8 am, where free vegemite toast will be served until 9 am. At all four mountain bases, Guest Services will be issuing Tim Tams, Aussie flags and stickers, with Aussie tunes from chairlift tower speakers and lift stations getting skiers in the mood. The Southern Cross flag will be raised atop Highlands Bowl at Aspen Highlands at 3, 774m and keep an eye out for Aussie road signs on gondolas and mountain trails.

Taste buds will be tingling with participating on-mountain restaurants featuring BBQs including sausage sizzles, Snags & Beer lunch specials, and Aussie Burgers with beetroot, pineapple and fried eggs. Joey, the Aspen Snowmass’ skiing kangaroo will be on the slopes, with the Aspen Gondola Plaza serving Lamington between 3 – 4pm and the Aussie Day Closing Festivities at Chair 9 at The Little Nell with DJ Naka G – known for spinning at the X Games and the Olympics – playing Aussie tracks along with apres favorites.

For high resolution images, please click:

<https://aspensnowmass.imagerelay.com/fl/263f646aaf434651979a4ab3393b457c>

Photo credit: Jeremy Swanson

A compilation of video footage in vimeo and B-Roll of the lamington contest featuring Chef Neil Perry, as well as the skiing kangaroo and Australia Day celebrations will be available January 25 for January 26 release.



Winner Chef Curtis Cameron of The Little Nell, with Joey, the Australia Day Kangaroo.

Aspen Skiing Company operates the four mountains in the Aspen Snowmass area - Snowmass, Aspen Mountain, Aspen Highlands and Buttermilk - as well as the award-winning Ski & Snowboard Schools of Aspen Snowmass. For more information on Aspen Skiing Company, please call 800-525-6200 or 970-925-1220, or visit the company's website at www.aspensnowmass.com.

The Little Nell, Aspen's only Five-Star, Five-Diamond, ski-in/ski-out hotel, offers luxury services and unparalleled access to America's most famous mountain town. Guests of The Little Nell – a Relais & Châteaux - enjoy a cosmopolitan yet intimate ambience, haute cuisine, superior wine and exclusive adventures and amenities designed to rejuvenate the mind, body and spirit. 675 East Durant Avenue, 970.920.4600, www.thelittlenell.com.

Biography: Chef Neil Perry is an Australian [chef](#), [restaurateur](#), author and television presenter. He also is the coordinator for [Qantas](#) Flight Catering under his company Rockpool Consulting. Perry co-owns and is executive chef of restaurants in Australia. In Sydney his current stable consists of five restaurants located in the city's CBD: his flagship fine-diner [Rockpool](#), modern Chinese restaurant Spice Temple, steakhouse Rockpool Bar & Grill and the newly opened Burger Projects. The original incarnation of Rockpool Bar & Grill is located in [Melbourne](#) along with another restaurant, Rosetta.