

Five curbside eateries vying for coveted 2010 Street Vendor of the Year title at Vendy Awards



Oleg Voss' Schnitzel & Things is one of five street vendors hungry for the 2010 Street Vendor of the Year title.

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New York's best street chefs are sharpening their knives and gearing up to get taste buds tingling at this year's hotly anticipated Vendy Awards.

Five of the city's best curbside eateries are set to go head-to-head in an all-day cookoff for the coveted title of 2010 Street Vendor of the Year.

"One you try the food, that's it, you're hooked and you come back again, and again - and again," said [Yassir Raouli](#), who owns [Bistro Truck](#), which parks on Fifth Ave., between 16th and 17th Sts. and specializes in [Moroccan](#)-influenced meals.

"We're already winners because we've been chosen as finalists. It's a big deal to be nominated by New Yorkers, they're a tough crowd, and tough critics."

The meals dished up by thousands of [New York City](#) street vendors every day were whittled down to the five through a public vote.

To win the overall crown, finalists have to cook for a panel of judges and the hungry masses during an all-day ticketed event on [Governors Island](#) on Sept. 25.

Proceeds from the event go to the [Urban Justice Center's](#) Street Vendor Project, which advocates for the city's sidewalk chefs.

"It's a hard job, but these awards validate why we're doing this," said [Oleg Voss](#), co-owner of Schnitzel & Things, which runs in [Manhattan](#) and [Brooklyn](#).

"The reason is to provide New Yorkers with a gourmet, fast option that they can quickly grab and then head back to their offices and get into a schnitzel coma."

Voss' truck was named Rookie of the Year in last year's contest, but the 28-year-old isn't taking winning for granted.

"I know if they've been selected as finalists, their food is damn good," he said. "The competition is going to be fierce."

[Esam Muhammad](#), 45, who co-owns King of Falafel on the corner of 30th St. and Broadway, in [Astoria, Queens](#), likes his chances of winning this year.

He was a finalist in 2007 and 2009, and is convinced the third time will be the charm and he'll head home with a first-place finish.

"People come, they like it, they ask for the secret recipes, but I say no," he crowed about his food. "So they come back the next day."

[Rosa Ofelia Cardoza's](#) [El Rey de Sabor](#) Mexican food truck, which pulls up at three midtown locations, is just thrilled to be in the finals.

"I thank God for the recognition," Cardoza, 36, said, adding with a wink: "You don't even gain weight with my meals."

[Liliana Velasquez](#) and [Adolfo Gonzalez](#), who run Patacon Pisao, which serves Venezuelan meals on 202nd St. between Ninth and 10th Aves. in Inwood every evening, round out the finalists.

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