

THE MORNING CALL

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Cupcake-Off opens Bucks' 'Cake Off'

By Kathy Lauer

An Allentown bakery competed with Bucks County bakeries in a Cupcake-Off, a competition at Bucks County Playhouse hosted by Broadway star and "American Idol" runner-up Justin Guarini, who stars in the playhouse's new musical, "Cake Off."

Maison Blanc of Allentown tied for first place with Maryanne's Pastry Shoppe of Doylestown for its chocolate cupcakes decorated with pale yellow icing flowers in the competition judged by the cast of "Cake Off" and Alex Fraser, playhouse producing director.

Cupcake judging cast members were Euan Morton, Michele Ragusa and Aidan J. Lawrence. Guarini, the Bucks County native who was the runner-up to Kelly Clarkson on the first season of "American Idol," has multiple roles in "Cake Off," which features a score by Adam Gwon, and had its world premiere last year at Signature Theatre in New York.

The play, which runs through Sept. 10, follows the 50th Annual Millberry Cake Off, where the prize for the best dessert has been raised to \$1 million. For the first time, men also are allowed to enter, and Paul, a single dad, goes up against Bake Off veteran Rita in America's most famous baking championship. Based on the original play "Bake Off" by Sheri Wilner, "Cake Off" features a book by Wilner and Julia Jordan, and lyrics by Gwon and Julia Jordan.

All three were involved in Buck County Playhouse's Oscar Hammerstein Festival, named for the writer who mentored a young Stephen Sondheim at his Bucks County farm. The festival includes a year-long program that offers mentorship to early-career composers and lyricists.

Guarini last performed at Bucks County Playhouse as Bobby in "Company" last season. His Broadway appearances include "Wicked," "Romeo and Juliet," "Green Day's American Idiot" and "Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown."

First Friday fireworks will follow the performance on Sept. 2.

• **"Cake Off,"** 7:30 p.m. today, Sept. 1, 7 and 8; 8 p.m. Friday and Sept. 9; 2 and 8 p.m. Saturday and Sept. 3, 10; 2 p.m. Sunday and Aug. 31, Sept. 4; 7:30 p.m. Aug. 30 and Sept. 6; 7 p.m. Sept. 2, Bucks County Playhouse, 70 S. Main St., New Hope. Tickets: \$35-\$69. 215-862-2121, www.bcptheater.org.