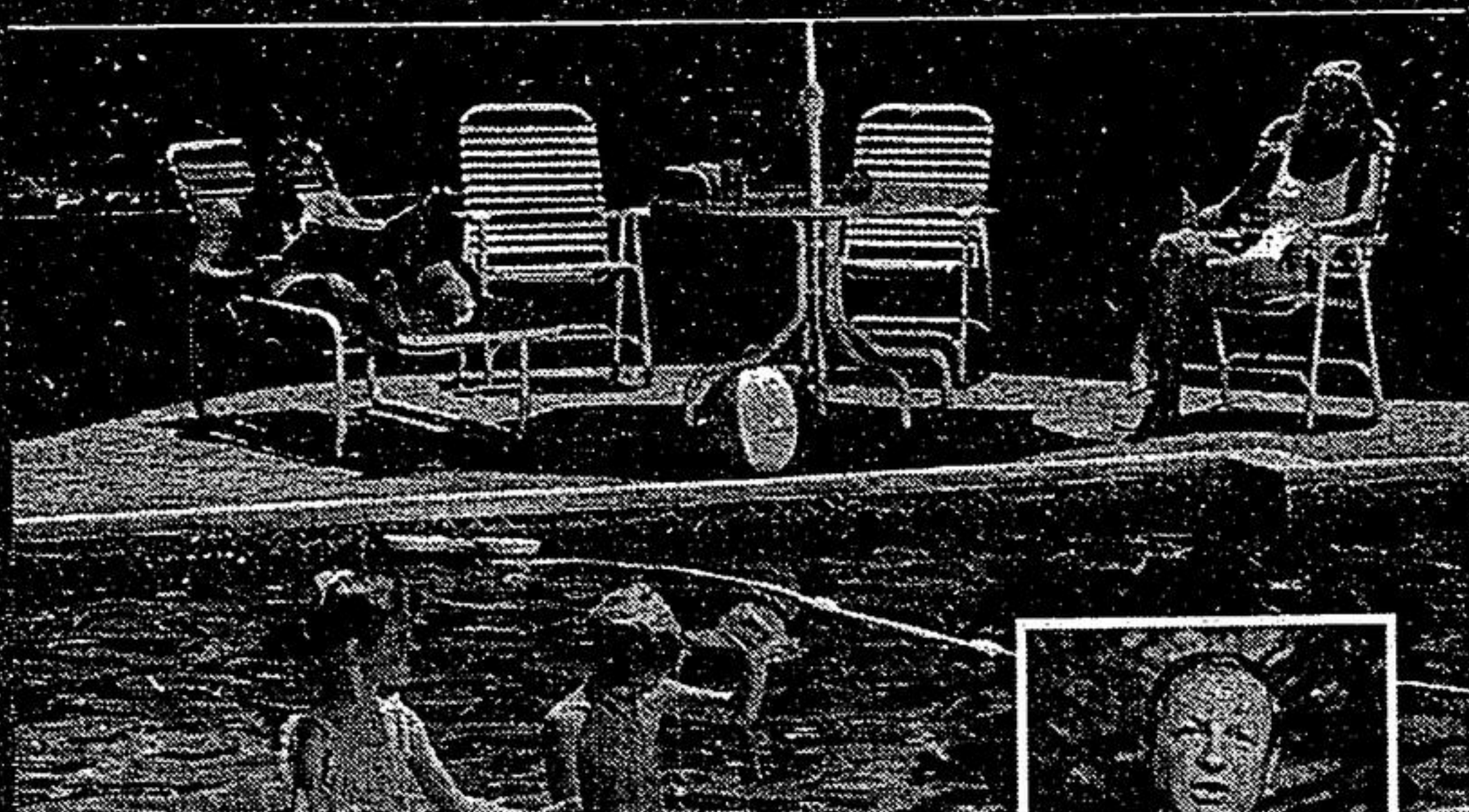




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Tourism grants considered

Some politicians fear new policy will open a Pandora's box of donations

BY PATRICK CASEY
Staff Writer

A plea for funds from two local theatre groups has convinced regional councillors to draft a new policy to award money to organizations that promote tourism in York Region.

Last Thursday, the region's finance committee heard from representatives for the Red Barn Theatre in Jackson's Point and Newmarket's Resurgence Theatre Company, requesting grants in support of their summer programs.

And following a lengthy debate, the committee allowed economic development director Don Eastwood to create new guidelines that permit organizations to pursue grants from the region.

However, the decision quickly drew the ire of Vaughan Mayor Lorna Jackson, who warned her colleagues the approach paves the way for a return to 1995, when the region annually budgeted grants to community groups.

The grant program has been terminated for the past five years, replaced by a service agreement that allots funds for non-profit groups, such as child abuse programs and family counselling services. Projects must address an identified need in the community.

"We should not, in any way, get back to the way it was before and open our doors to donations. We got the door closed and it would be foolish to do it again," stressed Jackson.

"People would be knocking down our door, it would be precedent setting. Many other groups are doing exactly the same thing and once you open the door, you have to support everybody or you can get sued. Where do you draw the line?"

"This is why we were lucky we got out when we did. We may be charged with discrimination if we don't support one of these groups."

But Markham Regional Councillor Ralph Aselin said he'd be surprised if council, working with an annual budget of \$800 million, could not set aside

\$15,000 for the Red Barn and the Resurgence Theatre Company and another \$85,000 that the economic development department could use to promote tourism across the region.

"These types of things improve tourism," said Aselin. "Municipalities are already contributing substantial amounts and we should be supporting them as tourist groups."

Lake Simcoe Arts Foundation president Stephen Pallett, whose group operates the Red Barn Theatre, requested a one-time donation of \$10,000 to help promote the venue, after Georgina came forward with a \$12,000 grant.

Canada's oldest professional summer theatre, the 52-year-old Red Barn attracted 160 tour busloads of seniors and school children last year and has already booked another 110 groups so far this season.

"We want to make attending the Red Barn Theatre enjoyable for everyone. It is a bona fide tourist stop in York Region," said Pallett. "But we need a little help."

"We want to work with you to increase York Region's profile as a tourist destination. The plays are there, but we need sponsorship packages. In our area, we don't have a lot of the business corporations that are in the southern area. It has been hard the last two years getting to these corporations... we just don't have the funds to have a person working full time on it."

In March, the region's economic development committee recommended a \$5,000 arts grant for the Resurgence Theatre Company to assist funding its York Shakespeare Festival 2000 this summer in Newmarket.

However, regional council voted against the request, in part because the Newmarket-based company showed a profit of more than \$20,000 following last year's successful debut.

A new policy will be shown to regional council by the end of June.

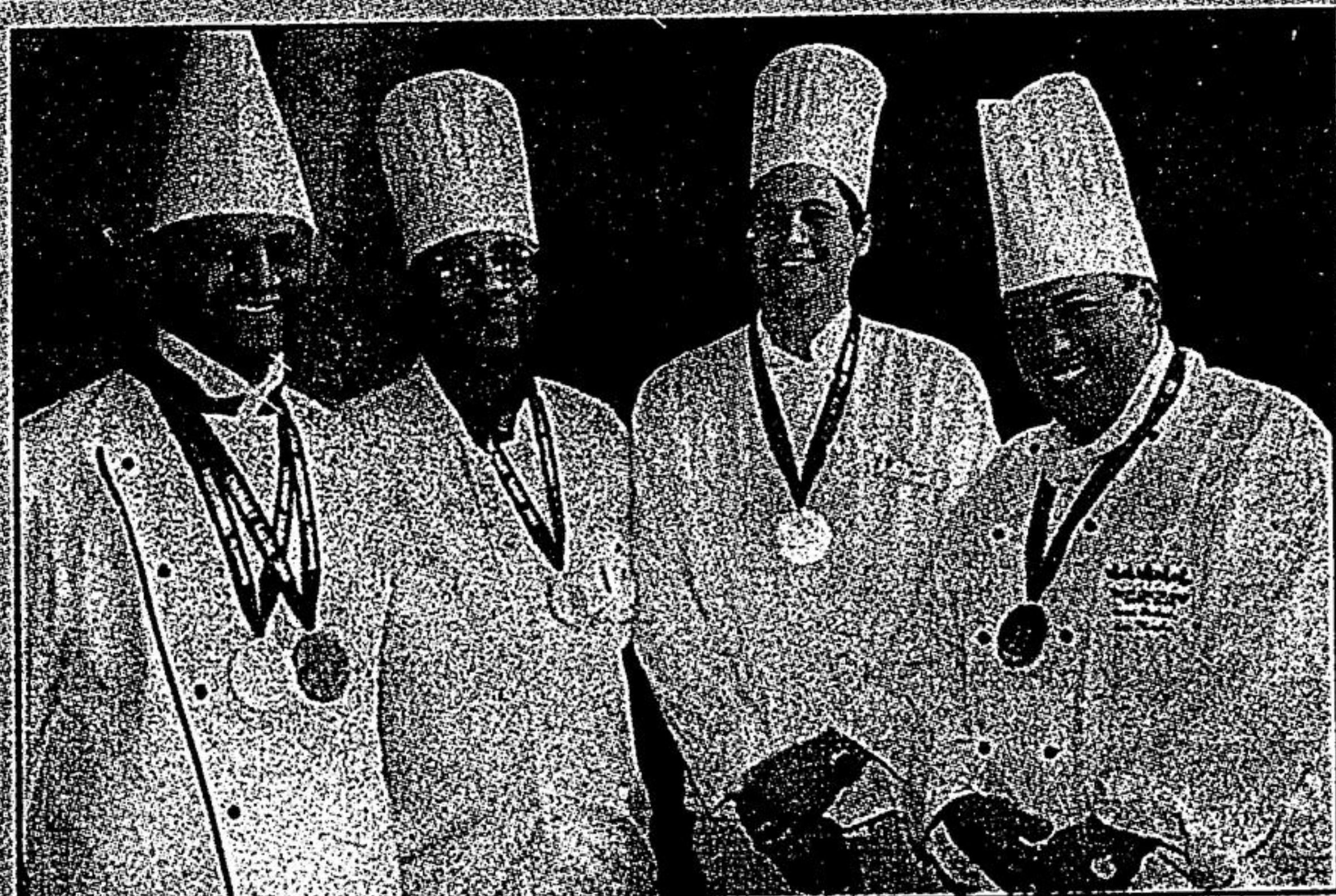
Embassy Suites chefs win big at national food show

James Bodanis and his fellow chefs at the Embassy Suites Hotel, put their culinary skills to the test at a recent food show competition in Toronto. Together, they earned five medals for excellence in food preparation.

The four chefs took part in the Canadian Federation of Chefs and Cooks Competition held at the Automotive Building at the Canadian National Exhibition on May 5-7.

"It was a great thrill to be participating at that level," says Mr. Bodanis, an Executive Chef at Unionville Café at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Markham. "There was a lot of culinary talent on display at the show, and we're extremely proud to be recognized for our efforts."

The Embassy Suites team won two golds, two silvers and one bronze medal over the three-day competition. Mr. Bodanis won in the category of Gala Menu; Vernon Marshall won in the category of Individual Plated Entrées; Cliff Castellas won for Chocolate and Vegetable Carving; and Dino Papamichalopoulos won for Cold Buffet Platters.



Embassy Suites

(R-L) Executive Chef James Bodanis, Dino Papamichalopoulos, Vernon Marshall & Cliff Castellas

Competing on a national level is one thing. On an international level, the stakes are much higher. As a member of the Culinary Team Ontario, Mr. Bodanis will travel to Erfurt, Germany in October to compete in the International Culinary Art Exhibition, better known as the World Culinary Olympics.

"I'm really looking forward to representing Ontario in Germany," says Mr. Bodanis, who has been a professional chef for 20 years. "It will be exciting to compete on that level, with so many great chefs from around the world."

For Mr. Bodanis and his fellow team members, preparation for the World Culinary Olympics has already

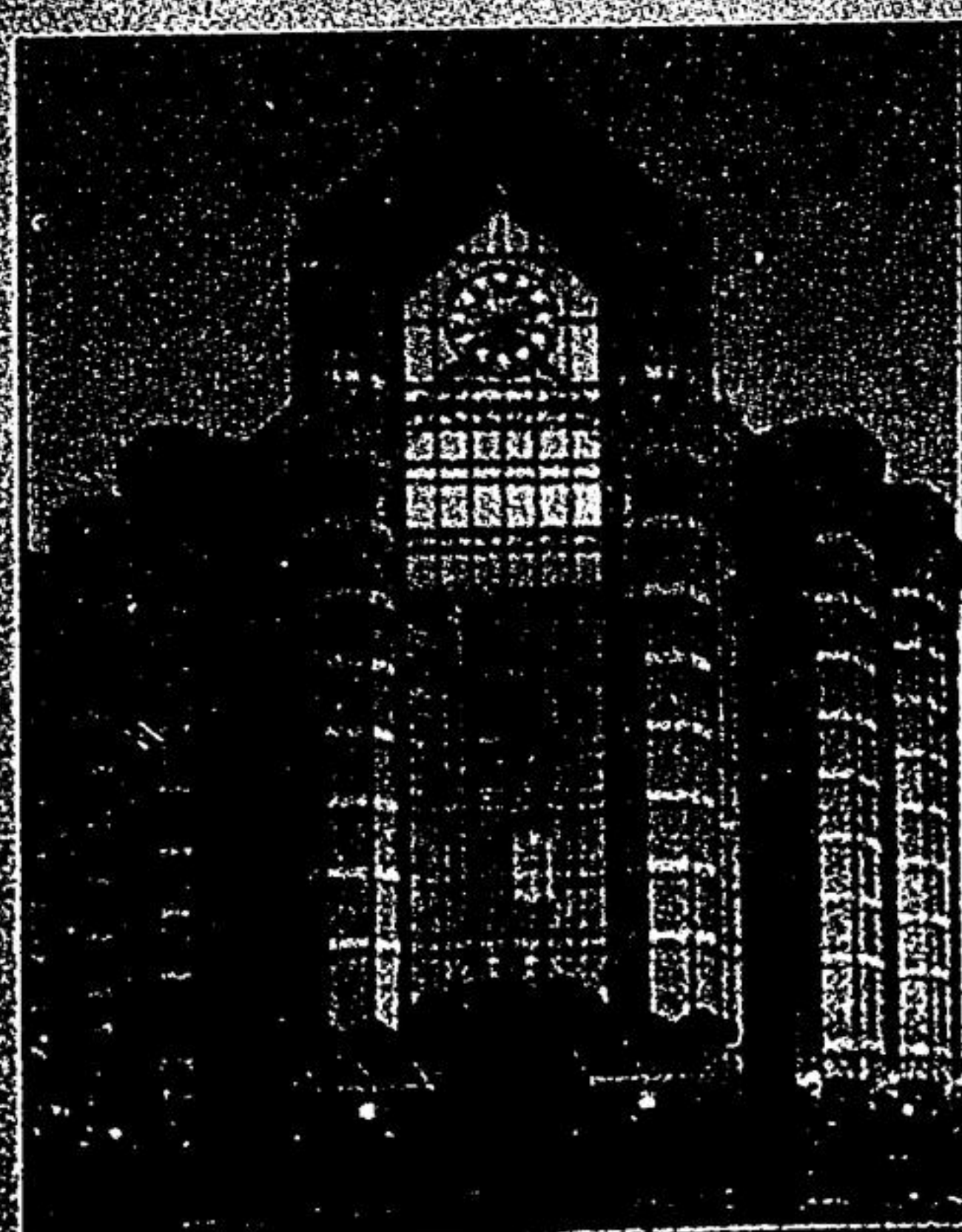
begun in earnest. The team conducts weekly meetings where they discuss strategy and brainstorm ideas.

"The judges rate you on meal balance, nutritional value, creativity, originality and presentation," says Mr. Bodanis. "To us, demonstrating our various skills in all areas is very exciting."

When he is not preparing for food competitions, Mr. Bodanis and his team of professionals are busy preparing delicious meals for local and out-of-town visitors. Not to be missed is the weekly Sunday Brunch where Executive Pastry Chef Jeff Cheng dazzles customers with his scrumptious selection of fine pastries. Sunday Brunch takes place from 11:30AM-2:30PM.

Embassy Suites is located at 8500 Warden Ave. (at Hwy 7) in Markham and can be reached at (905) 470-8500.

Their website is www.embassy-suites.com/es/toronto.



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