

What's Cooking in Culinary Arts?

By: Reegan Craker

Young students acknowledge their own roots and the roots of their peers in a Cultural Food Fair held at the Culinary Arts program in North Ed Career Tech. This event is not just for the students to share their history, but is also a judged competition. Seven judges sampled food, viewed student presentations, and most importantly, chose winners.

Even through such a nerve-racking ordeal, the young chefs smiled and presented their heritage proudly. Many recipes were passed down, generation by generation, until they reached these students. Now, they are ready to be passed on to the next generation.

Most of the young chefs were at ease. First-year student Alex "Rico" Smith stated how calm he felt during the fair. "I don't fold under pressure," he said, "I'm always in a good mood when I'm presenting."

Smith made arepas, a cheesy, fluffy, pancake-like snack his mother made for him while they lived in Panama. His mother is originally from Columbia, where the savory treat is from.

Second-year student Andrew Staley made tiramisu, a creamy, coffee-flavored Italian dessert. While he did not have any Italian ancestry, Staley was still very relaxed with the presentation process. "It felt good," he said.

Although they didn't win, both Staley and Smith felt that the event went smoothly and showcased a supportive environment for all. They "would love to do something like this again."

This food fair is just one of the things that makes up the Culinary Arts program at Career Tech. In the classroom, students go through rotations: small groups assigned to different parts of the kitchen doing different tasks. These tasks include Bake Shop, Pantry, Front of House, Hotline, and Dish/Prep. Rotations let the students try different baking and cooking styles, food presentation, and proper clean up while cooking. The young chefs may prefer some rotations over others, but they all still appreciate the different opportunities they can experience in their program.

Every student, no matter the jokes they may make, fully appreciates the class and time they have at Culinary Arts. The teaching chefs, who each specialize in different areas, help the students broaden their understanding of culinary skills.

Students cannot wait to put their skills to the ultimate test after they graduate. A number of students have big plans, including going to culinary schools, starting their own restaurants, and working hard to improve other restaurants. Their Career Tech experience makes them good candidates for culinary jobs.

Reporting on this event had the added benefit for Writers Studio reporters: sampling the culinary students' work. It is an assignment that this reporter would love to be assigned again.