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Chef Q & A: Keiser student earns top chef honor

*BY MARIA SONNENBERG
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Remember the name Andrew Addleman, because you are sure to hear more about this talented young chef from Keiser University. Fourteen months into his training at Keiser, Addleman has been earning kudos right and left.

He recently became the Southeast Regional Student Chef of the Year at a competition in Charlotte, N.C. Now, he's on his way to duke it out with three other crème de la crème chefs for the 2009 Student Chef of the Year title during the ACF national convention at the Orlando World Center Marriott.

The four finalists will receive a "market basket" list of ingredients and will be asked to create their own recipes using these required items.

He'll explain more.

What's the next step for you?

I'll be competing against the other finalists from the four regions of the country. We'll compete at the American Culinary Federation convention in July 11 to 14. 2,500 chefs already have registered to attend. These are among the most amazingly accomplished chefs in the country, so this is an amazing honor for me.

I've been so fortunate. Keiser has given me tremendous support. They work side by side with you, and they even funded my way to compete in Charlotte.

What was your winning recipe?

Lemon flounder with sweet potato mash, grilled zucchini, deep fried beets and citrus beurre blanc.

What will the judges at the final competition look for?

They'll look for knowledge of fundamental techniques such as knife skills. They want to know that you have the foundation. They're also looking for creativity and originality. Taste also is a big point value.

Have you been competing long?

My first taste of competition was the 2008 Zonta Chocolate Festival. Last year, I was also part of the Keiser team at the Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association Show in September. We placed fourth overall in the state. I had a blast.

So you enjoy competing?

If I could find a way to compete as a career, I'd do it. One of my goals is to be on the Culinary

Olympics team. It's a long, arduous process, but I want it bad.

When I'm done competing, I want to judge competitions.

How did you become interested in cooking?

I've been working in restaurants since I was 15. I started at my aunt and uncle's restaurant in Michigan. I actually never wanted to be a chef, but the chef at the restaurant promised to teach me. Everything clicked. When he moved to Florida, he offered me a job here.

Are you working now?

I'm a sous chef at the Winter Park Racquet Club. Bill Wolf, the chef there, won the World Cup in '96. That's a big deal; he's the man.

I live in Orlando with my girlfriend, who works at the Hard Rock.

Since both of you are in the business, do you get out to eat much?

We love to go out to eat, exactly, because she's a server and I cook, and we don't want to bring the work home.

What would be a perfect meal?

I eat simply, so something like skin-in seared snapper with some good buttermilk mashed potatoes and snow peas.

What famous person would love to invite to dinner?

Thomas Keller, the executive chef at The French Laundry. He's the end-all, beat-all. I'm a big seafood fan, so I'd wow him with crab cakes.
