

October 8, 2008

Culinary students serve up silver, bronze medals

BY MARIA SONNENBERG
FOR FLORIDA TODAY



Keiser University's culinary students won awards at a recent competition in Orlando. Top row, from left are Marj Erixson, Kyle Rhodes, Deb Buza, Cynthia Chapman, Darrin R. Durham, Robert White III and Roberta Clare. Bottom row, from left are team captain Andrew Addelman and Drew Sanders. (For FLORIDA TODAY)

MELBOURNE — Culinary students and instructors from Keiser University cooked their way to silver and bronze medals during the American Culinary Federation competition held recently at the Florida Restaurant Show in Orlando.

Instructors Marj Erixson and Deb Buza won bronze medals, and the Keiser culinary student team walked out of the kitchen with a silver medal.

"This is the first time the students competed," said chef Darrin Durham, Keiser culinary program coordinator. "They did phenomenal work. It gives them exposure and the experience of working with other culinarians."

The Keiser student team consisted of Cindy Chapman and Drew Sanders of Palm Bay, Robert White and Andrew Addelman of Melbourne and Kyle Rhodes of Cocoa Beach.

The senior on the team, 32-year-old Chapman, began cooking as a way to help her son's food allergies. She grew to love the culinary arts and wants to work in a pastry shop after graduation next year.

"Always be prepared for the unexpected," she said.

White, who has worked in kitchens since he was 15, joined the team to challenge himself. He wants to open his own restaurant, even though he knows how demanding the profession is.

“Be prepared to work for long hours,” he said as advice to other students considering the field. The Orlando competition gave him another incentive to push himself. “It really inspired me,” he said.

Team captain Addelman joined the team because he admired the efforts of his boss, who competed in California.

Participating in the ACF competition was thrilling to Addelman.

“You’ve got to work past the anxiety,” he said. “Words can’t describe the experience.”

Rhodes began cooking when he was 11 years old, thanks to lessons he received from his stepmother.

Because he missed the competition he enjoyed playing high school baseball, Rhodes traded the baseball and mitt for the elegant dishes he hopes one day will become his signature.

At 18, Drew Sanders didn’t know what field to pursue. A job in a restaurant helped to define his passion. Four years later, his chicken-stuffed mushroom appetizer won a national award from Diamond Crystal Salt.

To clinch silver, the team cooked up a meal that included an appetizer of pistachio nut crusted flounder layered with butternut squash risotto and spinach served with a butternut squash and roasted tomato sauce, followed by a salad featuring shaved fennel, orange segments, red cabbage and dried cranberries. For the entrée, the team prepared Poulet Saute Bercy.

The competitive feast ended with a raspberry tartlet.