

## **Iron Chef? Not Here!**

### **UMass Dining Features Four Visiting College Chefs**

It was a beautiful evening on the UMass campus, with students bustling around as they retreated to their evening activities in the cool spring weather. But even busier was the main concourse of the famed Berkshire Dining Commons, where UMass Dining held the 2010 Visiting College Chef Series by hosting four schools from all over the United States before Spring Break.

Billed as “An Epic Battle of Taste” event, 8 chefs from four schools were together at UMass to showcase their students’ favorites and regional specialties. In each of Berkshire’s regular food stations was a chef and their sous chef from one of the four regions of the United States—Chef Barry Greenburg, from the University of Iowa, representing the Midwest, Chef Paul Oesterle, from the University of Georgia, cooking from the South, Chef Manfred Edler, from Villanova University in Pennsylvania, up in the Northeast, and way out West, Chef Nijo Joseph from Stanford University.

Each chef brought their own unique flair and color to the dishes which would be served to the students and then voted on, chosen by which menu choice received the most votes with “one night, one venue, and one winner.” The dishes had regional influences—“I collaborated with my staff and picked recipes that were successful in our dining commons at home, but also ones that highlighted ingredients unique to the Southern region,” says Chef Oesterle. His dishes were decidedly Southern, with shrimp and grits being a favorite of the students, as well as a sultry pecan sweet potato side dish. Chef Edler brought a New England touch to his dishes with a lobster orzo gratin, and called out to his Austrian roots with beef short ribs to bring “a touch of Austria to UMass.”

The international tour de force goes on. Chef Joseph catered to the thousands of students who munch on our vegetarian dishes each day with an entirely vegetarian menu comprised of all Indian dishes from around the country, and for the gourmands, Chef Greenburg showed us fancy dishes with contrasting flavors—a sweet soybean hummus with fried beet crisps.

The students loved the food, and everyone thought the assortment of dishes was perfect for sampling a bit of everything that evening. “All the chefs brought unique dishes with ingredients that were fresh and delicious,” said sophomore Lilly V. as she filled her plate. “I loved the variety!” Friends agreed, loving the “diversity and range of dishes,” as junior Mary W. happily proclaimed.

“The students had a real treat tonight; it was a great way to showcase the talent of the college chefs”, commented Ken Toong, Executive Director of UMass Dining, they all work so hard to serve their students daily and tonight they could have some fun as well.

Talking with each chef, they each emphasized how important it is to cook from the heart and have a passion for what you are doing. Needing no fancy gadgets—each chef wields a chef’s knife and a steady hand, the chefs all told me their advice for budding chefs—and it’s really quite simple! Having a passion for what you’re doing, a true love for food, and a motivation to work hard is the key to success in the culinary world, and these chefs have got it spot on!

Although each school had winning dishes - the shrimp and grits from Georgia, the boneless short ribs from Villanova, the mango lassi from Stanford, and the penne pasta with red onion from Iowa, I think the students and staff were all winners tonight as well, with the fantastic foods and great atmosphere in Berkshire. It was truly an Epic Battle of Taste, with diverse flavors and sweet treats for all! Come back soon!

Jess Watsky '13

