

SIZZLE

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A Catered Affair

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BIG WIN for Big Sky Country

Carol Chandler, CC, takes the 2007 Student Culinarian of the Year award home to Montana.

It's appropriate that Carol Chandler, CC, hails from Big Sky Country, because this 25-year-old has big ideas for her future. She has her eye on an apprenticeship at a prestigious property, plans to be a certified executive chef within the next decade (and certified master chef sometime in the distant future), and has a passion for sustainability and sourcing locally that's rare in one so young.

Chandler was named 2007 ACF Student Culinarian of the Year, an award sponsored by Custom Culinary, Inc., Oak Brook, Ill., at the ACF national convention in Orlando. She competed against three other finalists in a national cook-off to earn the title.

A drive to succeed

A member of ACF Montana Chefs Association, Chandler hails from Plentywood, a small town in the northeast corner of Montana. She graduated from the University of Montana's College of Technology, Missoula, in 2006 with an associate degree in foodservice management and a certificate in culinary arts. And although Chandler has a slew of experience behind her, from a management internship



Carol Chandler, center, 2007 ACF Student Culinarian of the Year, is congratulated by, left to right, Rick Eppers, corporate chef, HOPCO Food Brokers, Tampa, Fla.; Mike Speranza, CEC, corporate executive chef, Custom Culinary, Inc.; Scott Gilbert, CEC, AAC, director of culinary, Custom Culinary, Inc.; and Michael Smith, CEC, corporate executive chef, Custom Culinary, Inc.

at Notre Dame University to a stint as a culinary teaching assistant, she wants more, hence, the apprenticeship.

"An apprenticeship would allow me to get out of Montana, not that I ever want to move away, but there just aren't opportunities and resources available that will rocket my career to the height I'm envisioning for myself," she says. "It also will allow me to gain the full-time, long-term experience that is lacking on my résumé, and help me develop

my certification from certified culinarian to certified sous chef.

"I never want to stop learning in this diverse industry, and I want to be as versatile a chef as I can be. I usually pursue jobs that improve on my weaknesses or offer new, unknown skills, and stay employed there for six to nine months before moving on to the next challenge. This has proven to be quite successful, as it has provided invaluable experience, and allows me to pick and choose my career

path rather than just settle for whatever job comes along."

A will to sacrifice

In January 2007, Chandler left a seasonal position with Walt Disney World in Orlando and returned to her previous full-time position as a line cook at the Stock Farm Club, a private country club and golf course in Hamilton, Mont. There she trained for the student culinarian of the year competition. The club's executive chef, Toby McCracken, CEC, has been her coach for the last three years.

"The biggest supporters of my competing have been my family and employers," she says. "They were huge stress-relievers, financial supporters and cheerleaders. Also, I try to keep in touch with employers past and present, and many have provided invaluable resources, finances and encouragement."

Applications for 2008 Student Culinarian of the Year are due by Oct 31, 2007. Log on to www.acfchefs.org/Content/Events/Awards for award information and an application.

Ready to Win

For the ACF Student Team National Champions, up against stiff competition, it came down to hard work, practice and a will to always do better.

Students from Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College (A-B Tech) in Asheville, N.C., junior members of ACF Western North Carolina Culinary Association, were named 2007 ACF National Student Team Champions July 23 in Orlando. The team, which represented the Southeast Region, competed against three other regional teams earlier that day on the trade-show floor.

The ACF National Student Team Championship has been sponsored by R.L. Schreiber, Inc. since its inception in 1993.

A-B Tech team members are Michelle Bailey, Daniel Gorman, Matthew Gruber, Jason Huang, captain, and Chambli Stuber. The team earned its finalist slot

at the national convention by competing during the Southeast Regional Conference April 29-May 1 in Nashville, Tenn.

The team was coached by Bronwen McCormick, Charles DeVries, CEPC, and John Hofland, CEC, culinary instructors at A-B Tech. Sizzle invited McCormick to give her perspective on the team's win in Orlando.

How confident was the team going into the finals?

I think the team felt good about what they could do. They felt practiced and ready. They definitely understood that they had to perform at their highest level, because the competition was going to be very good.



The ACF Student Team National Champions are, left to right, Michelle Bailey, Daniel Gorman, Chambli Stuber, Jason Huang, captain, and Matthew Gruber. They are congratulated by Tom Schreiber, right, president, R.L. Schreiber, Inc.

They knew that they would face teams better than anything they had faced before.

In 2006, the Asheville-Buncombe team was edged out of first place by less than a quarter of a point. What effect did that near-win have on this year's team?

Most importantly, we knew that every little detail could make a difference. We spent a lot of time looking at our food and performance carefully. We

knew that we had to continually push ourselves to the next level. Nothing was off-limits for critique and analysis.

What kind of practice schedule did they have to commit to?

Generally, we practiced once a week—a complete run-through of a competition. Team members practiced knife skills on their own, as well. Closer to competitions, we would toss in an additional practice.

Knowledge Bowl Victory

For the 2007 Baron H. Galand Culinary Knowledge Bowl champions, the magic of teamwork was the key to successfully playing the game.

It was a moment of truth for Dina Altieri, CEC, CCE. The coach of the New England Culinary Institute (NECI) team was watching the Knowledge Bowl competition at the regional conference in Pittsburgh when she realized that her students had figured out what being a team was all about.

“At one point during the competition, a team member

buzzed in because he knew his teammate knew the correct answer,” she says. “Now that is team work.”

The NECI team—Jakub Cogswell, Ángel Custodio, Rosalynn Kooker, Joseph Mitchell, captain, and Jeff Surdel, junior members of ACF New England Culinary Institute chapter—went on to win a suspenseful final in Orlando and

become 2007 Baron H. Galand Culinary Knowledge Bowl champions.

“This team is a great example of a highly functioning team,” Altieri says. “They are honest about their abilities, and while taking ownership of their own disciplines, also respect and rely on the knowledge of each of the other team members.

The 2007 Baron H. Galand Knowledge Bowl was a cliffhanger, as all those involved would agree, and came down to a final question.

“I just reminded myself that we were going up against a really

good team, and that I needed to be all right with coming in second,” Kooker says. The team didn't lose, however, and when the final buzzer went, Altieri knew that her team had come through. “I jumped out of the audience with my arms open, and rushed toward them,” she says. “The students were ecstatic.”

Applications to compete in the 2008 Baron H. Galand Knowledge Bowl are due by Dec. 31. Visit www.acfchefs.org/Content/Education/KnowledgeBowl.htm for more information and application.