

CCGA Culinary Students, Cook-Off make good Chemistry at Benefit

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June 29, 2017

Video of the event can be found at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YKhamY_xfC0

Baking is nothing more than a chemical reaction, with a pinch of creativity sprinkled into the process. And a group of culinary arts students at College of Coastal Georgia have spent the last month learning the basics of chemistry, a venture that culminated Wednesday with the fourth annual Cook-Off Contest at the college.



College of Coastal Georgia student Kellie McCaughtry serves up chili she made for the fourth annual Chemistry 1100 cook-off on June 28.
Bobby Haven/The Brunswick News

Students in CCGA's introductory chemistry class, comprised over the summer of a cohort of culinary arts majors, showcased their skills on Wednesday by preparing dishes made up of only the handful of ingredients they could find at America's Second Harvest food bank.

"That's the challenge — they don't know what's on the shelf and they're given three minutes to shop," said Andrea Wallace, the chemistry professor. "Then they get three minutes to pull things off the shelf, and whatever they get they have to use in their dish."

Wallace designed the chemistry class to fit the interests of the culinary students, and she capped the course with a service-learning project requiring students to create their own recipes using ingredients from the food bank.

One dollar donations at the cook-off allowed visitors to try every dish and vote on their favorites. All the proceeds raised were donated to America's Second Harvest of Coastal Georgia, which covers six local counties.

Last year, America's Second Harvest distributed 2.2 million pounds of food to the community.

Earlier in the semester, Wallace had her students toured the food pantry in Brunswick. She said the project raised their awareness of local poverty.

Every \$1 donation could create five meals, Wallace said.

Jess Weston, who created a strawberry truffle cake recipe, compiled the dish's nutrition information as part of the project.

"It helped me get an understanding on the compilations of calories, the fats and everything else," she said. "Fortunately, it does not show how many calories that were in this recipe, but I'm sure you can imagine what heavy cream and condensed milk and sugar and all that adds up to."

The delicious end product should be worth it, though, she said.

"Every calorie is a smile," she said.

The course was a far departure from the culinary students' typical class experience, said sophomore Mercedes Sowders.

"We all, for the past year, just focused on food, we create food," she said. "So then we come into chemistry ... and it's a totally different learning experience. Normally we're hands-on in the kitchen, compared to sitting in a desk."

The students had to combine their culinary skills and chemistry knowledge to break down each recipe to its basic chemical molecules, Wallace said.

"It does translate back to the actual materials and the chemicals that we cover in class," she said. "There's actually a lot of chemistry in cooking."