Sullivan University
Culinary Competition Team

Regional Champs!

Back row, left to right are Brandon Thrash, Josh Rogers and Chef Derek Spenglove, CEPC, CCE. Team Manager and Chair of the Baking & Pastry Arts program at Sullivan University. Front row, left to right are Team Captain Mike Cichon, Wendy Giffens, Kori Bilzane, CEPC, Team Advisor and Joey Willen.
We’re Number One!

Sullivan University sure knows about winning! Sullivan has swept through many competitions winning over 280 medals and awards over the last ten years.

Former culinary competition team members now have very rewarding careers such as Angie Vives, Executive Chef for the Lt. Governor of Kentucky, or Eric Christen, Executive Pastry Chef for the Ritz Charles, Carmel, or Chef John Richards, owner of Zephyr Cove restaurant, Louisville, and a local member of the National Advisory Board for Sullivan University’s National Center for Hospitality Studies.

This is another success story – the story of five individuals who worked together to become a team. A team which had less time to prepare for this event than any other Sullivan Culinary Arts competition team. A young team, who last year “auditioned” at an in-house competition from which ten were chosen and then ultimately, these five. They represent our best!

“Our team were winners before they left . . .” declared Chef Spendlove “they were certainly winners when they returned home!”

As the American Culinary Federation’s Southeast Regional Winners, the team is heading to the national competition this July in Las Vegas, Nevada. We cheer them on!

Below are the gold medal-winning dishes prepared by Sullivan University’s Culinary Competition team.

Left to right: Smoked Salmon Roulade, Warm Essence of Grape, Raspberry and Bleu Cheese Salad, Lamb Encroute and Sweet Potato Apple Bread Pudding.
Once again Sullivan University's Culinary Arts Team made its presence known at the American Culinary Federation's Southeast Regional Competition by winning both the southeast regional first place trophy and five first place gold medals.

Held in Amelia Island, Florida at The Amelia Island Plantation, a 1350 acre 4-star resort on the Atlantic Coast, the ACF's competition consisted of a 60-minute knife skills and a 90-minute four course meal preparation contest judged on taste, preparation, and visual appeal.

Defeats 8 teams

The other teams who competed at the Regionals were, The Island of the Bahamas, Golden Isle of Georgia, Johnson and Wales University of Virginia, Johnson and Wales University of South Carolina, Opryland Hotel of Nashville, Faulkner State of Alabama, AB Technical of North Carolina, and the Art Institute of Florida.

A long trip

The Sullivan team had traveled 800 miles and was not planning to return without the gold. Like any competition, much attention was given to detail, which, normally turns up the heat, so to speak, yet each team member was poised and as cool as a cucumber (another food analogy) demonstrating the type of professionalism the industry warmly embraces.

The "team" Sullivan

The 2001 Culinary Arts Team, students Mike Cichon (West Lafayette, IN), Wendy Gitters (Columbus, OH), Josh Rogers (Jeffersonville, IN), Joey Willen (Crestwood, KY) and Brandon Thrash (Ashdown, AR), competed under the leadership of Sullivan University's team manager Chef Derek Spondolso, CEPC, CCE, Baking and Pastry Arts Department Chairperson, and former Olympic Gold Medal recipient, and team advisor, Chef-Instructor Kara Bitzane, CEPC.

Top notch judges

Judges at the competition were lead judge Roland Schaeffer, CEC, AAC, Joe Amendola, CEPC, CCE, AAC and Steven Jayson, CEC, AAC (who is the ACF National Chef of the Year). During the awards ceremony judge Chef Jayson said that "Sullivan has set a new standard for teamwork and competition."

Gold, gold, gold

Rumor has it that the University is expecting a call from the Ft. Knox depository, something about Sullivan University causing some type of gold shortage. All joking aside, in July the Sullivan team will be in Las Vegas for one thing, and you guessed it, to bring home the gold!

Nationals are next

Soon it will be time for the next challenge for our winning team - to compete for the number one spot in the nation. The Sullivan Team will square off against the other three first place regional winners at the American Culinary Federation's national culinary competition to be held July 22-26 in Las Vegas, Nevada.
Sullivan University’s 2001 Southeast Regional Hot Food champions, Mike Cichon, Josh Rogers, Joey Willen, Wendy Gittens, and Brandon Thrash were surprised with scholarships and awards at an American Culinary Federations, Kentucky Chapter Presidential Gala Awards dinner.

It was a great (and unexpected) honor to receive this award... My education with all the great chef-instructors enabled me to earn this award. I would like to thank all the chef-educators who have helped me.

Mike Cichon

Team captain Mike Cichon received the American Culinary Federation's award for Junior Member of the Year 2000.
President's Medallions have long been a tradition of the American Culinary Federation. Each elected National President requests input from Regional Vice Presidents about the candidates that they would like to nominate to receive this prestigious award. Each Regional Vice President is asked to submit a list of no more than eight candidates and the submission must include a 50-word citation about the nominee.

This year National President Chef Noel Cullen awarded Presidential Gold Medal Number 22 to Culinary Team Manager, Chef Derek Spendlove, CEPC, CCE, and Chair of the Baking & Pastry Arts program at Sullivan University’s National Center for Hospitality Studies. Chef Spendlove received the award for his service to the American Culinary Federation.

I accepted the presidential gold medal from a dear close friend, Dr. Noel Cullen and I have known each other for over 20 years since our years in Ireland whereby we competed and worked together. It was a privilege to receive this great and totally unexpected honor from him.

CHEF SPENDLOVE
When Chef Emeril Lagasse goes anywhere, it’s Bam! Bam! and excitement. His recent visit to Louisville for a book signing and to produce a segment of his ABC’s “Good Morning America” brought out the best of Sullivan University!

News swept the campus like wildfire!

A member of Sullivan University’s National Center for Hospitality Studies Advisory Board for almost ten years, Emeril Lagasse, master chef and owner of New Orleans’ most talked about restaurants, has a devoted following among the student body, faculty and staff of Sullivan University. Hearing the news that famous TV chef Emeril was coming to Louisville for a book signing at Hawley-Cooke Booksellers on Shelbyville Road in Louisville, faithful followers of Emeril Live! flew into action making preparations for the event.

Sullivan University invited to attend special event!

Excitement on campus grew to a fever pitch when Sullivan University culinary students, faculty and staff were invited by Emeril to be in the audience when Lagasse would hold a live culinary demonstration at the Bomhard Theatre. First he would appear live on local television station WHAS-TV’s “Good Morning Kentuckiana” followed by his Live! national culinary segment on ABC Television’s “Good Morning America” with Louisville chefs (and brothers) Joe and John Castro (John is the Executive Chef at Winston’s Restaurant, Sullivan University’s on-campus 3½ star gourmet restaurant).

A huge banner was made and signed by virtually the entire student body. Several hundred fully uniformed Sullivan University culinary students and staff brought platters of sumptuous homemade pastries and canapes, as well as hot apple cider and chocolate to the almost 1,500 fans waiting in line at the bookstore. Sullivan University did indeed, kick it up a notch for Emeril!

It may be easier to fill Emeril’s shoes than fill his toque!

To commemorate the occasion, the university’s Creative Communications Department along with Sullivan “master craftsman” Morris Gathof, constructed a huge four foot tall toque with hoola hoops, chicken wire and yards and yards of white fabric! The toque traveled in a van over to the bookstore where it was prominently displayed thanks to the efforts of Sullivan’s “resident bus climber” and Culinary Arts Chef-Instructor, Albert Schmid, CCC, CCE, CHE, CCP.

World-record possibility

The next day the toque appeared on stage where at the conclusion of the ABC television broadcast, Emeril personally signed and autographed our very big “souvenir. An application has been made to the famous Guinness Book of World Records, but the decision process is very lengthy and so far, no decision has been made – we’re keeping our fingers crossed!
NEWSFLASH:

Master Chef Walter Rhea named Director

University Executive Vice President Dr. Stephen Coppock announced today that Certified Master Pastry Chef Walter "Spud" Rhea is returning to Sullivan as Director of Sullivan University’s National Center for Hospitality Studies.

For the past three years, Chef Rhea has been serving as an official at the national headquarters of the American Culinary Federation in Florida. He served as the Executive Director supervising a staff of some 35 employees and the nationwide operations of this national organization.

Chef Rhea was part of Sullivan University for over 10 years as Chairman of Sullivan’s Baking & Pastry Arts program before he accepted his position at the ACF national office in Florida.

His credentials are many but just to highlight a few: After his name, he proudly wears the following designations: Chef Walter Rhea, CMPC, CCE, CEC, AAC. This stands for Certified Master Pastry Chef, Certified Culinary Educator, Certified Executive Chef, and designates his membership in the American Academy of Chefs.

In addition, Chef Rhea is a multiple gold medal winner of the International Culinary Olympics and in 1993 was selected to receive the highest honor designation of the American Culinary Federation, their "Chef Professionalism Award." Chef Rhea was the first American-born chef-educator to receive this award. Most recently, in 1999, he received the Chairman’s Award from the American Academy of Chefs recognizing his long service to the culinary profession.

At Sullivan, in addition to chairing the baking & pastry programs, Chef Rhea was team manager of Sullivan’s gold medal winning student competition teams which won over 150 medals and awards under his leadership.

In returning to Sullivan, Chef Rhea shared with President Sullivan his desire to lead Sullivan University to the position as the very top culinary and hospitality school in the United States. Chef Rhea said, “I am looking forward to working again with my long time colleagues, Culinary Department Chair, Chef Tom Hickey and Baking & Pastry Department Chair, Chef Derek Spendlove. I also am looking forward to working with Kerry Sommerville, Chairman of the Hotel/Restaurant program and Bettye Smothers Chairman of the Travel & Tourism program. Together we can lead this University to even higher recognition.

Chef Rhea’s return to Sullivan positions Sullivan even stronger in its recognition by professionals in the culinary field as one of the select top schools in the country.

Welcome back Chef Rhea!
“Suite” Success is coming!

Culinary Arts Department Chair, Chef Tom Hickey, is thrilled to announce the University’s decision to install the new Vulcan-Hart Signature Suite Range Series in one of Sullivan’s Basic Skills Kitchens. The Signature Suite, or as some refer to it the Waldorf Suite, is the state-of-the-art luxury equipment that is used in such world class restaurants as Emeril’s in New Orleans, The Essex House and Daniel Restaurant in New York City, The Inn at Little Washington in Virginia and at a few of the very top restaurants in the United States.

Will arrive soon!

Sullivan University wants to thank the Vulcan-Hart Corporation for their assistance in making this state-of-the-art new kitchen possible. This new kitchen suite, with other new equipment, is due to be installed between the end of the spring quarter and the start of the summer quarter 2001 and will allow Sullivan’s culinary students to experience cooking on the latest state-of-the-art suite style kitchen environment similar to that found in some of the top restaurants and hotels in the world.

First in Kentucky

This will be the first of this type of equipment installed anywhere in Kentucky and one of the few in the United States and is modeled after the European style kitchens found in leading restaurants in Europe. It will allow our students to work in teams around a central core of equipment similar to what they will use in top restaurants, resorts, and hotel kitchens. Chef Hickey said, “This is really the best of the best, and we are very proud to have the first installation of its kind installed in either a restaurant or a food service facility in this part of the country.” He added, “We are committed to providing our students with the very best equipment to learn on and this was the final kitchen that needed total replacement of equipment in the University’s culinary department. We have replaced or remodeled every kitchen at the National Center in just the past three years, and we are proud of where we are in the equipment and the training we are providing to our students.”
Chaine des Rotisseurs awards Sullivan additional $5,000 Culinary Scholarship

In addition to $6,000 previously raised by the Louisville chapter of the Chaine des Rotisseurs, a national gourmet society, the Chaine recently presented another $5,000 scholarship to be awarded to Sullivan students. Sullivan University received this scholarship as thanks for its assistance and leadership in hosting the regional Chaine cooking competition recently completed here in Louisville. These scholarships will be made available to current and future Sullivan culinary students.
Sullivan University changed my life!

The education David Poling (Class of 1990) received from the National Center of Hospitality Studies at Sullivan University and the University’s Graduate Employment Services Department (GES) changed his life. After managing various restaurants in his hometown of Ft. Wayne, Indiana, David wanted more of a career opportunity and decided to go back to college to earn a degree in culinary arts.

Sullivan’s tour impressive

David looked at several other colleges before he traveled to Louisville to tour Sullivan. “The culinary program was brand new; they had a lot of great ideas and wonderful plans,” David related. “I was impressed with the chefs, the campus and the staff,” he added. “I enrolled immediately.”

Eighteen months later David graduated and working with the assistance of Sullivan’s Graduate Employment Services office, was hired in the bakery department of a Disney World hotel in Orlando, Florida.

GES helped again!

Sullivan University’s Graduate Employment Service (GES) is not only fee-free, but a lifetime service for Sullivan graduates. A few years ago, David wanted to return to Louisville, contacted

GES and was hired as manager of the baking department at the Jefferson County Public School’s new Nutrition Service Center. “I enjoy giving back to the community,” said David. “The Center is the central kitchen for 141 schools, producing nearly 50,000 dinner rolls and 20,000 cookies every day in addition to a variety of other baked goods.”

Sullivan is a great place to start!

David enjoyed his collegiate experience at Sullivan. “It was a fun and exciting time. I learned so much and met a lot of great people.”

“College is a great place to find and follow your dreams – a great stepping stone for life and Sullivan University is a great place to start!”