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Escondido, Orange Glen, and San Pasqual High Students Face Off in Cooking Competition

Escondido, CA – Culinary students from Escondido, Orange Glen, and San Pasqual high schools took part in a district cooking competition last week at Orange Glen High. Each school had an entrée and a dessert team. Teams were responsible for selecting their recipe and ingredients.

A panel of four judges rated students on taste, texture, originality, difficulty, plating, and visual appeal. Their interaction with the judges, including how they responded to questions and their knowledge of the recipes and techniques was also considered. Some of the teams were practicing their recipes for weeks, while others had only made their recipe once prior to presenting it for the judges.

Lincoln Zdunich and Cecilia Villaume from San Pasqual High were awarded first place for their shrimp pasta. Ramiro Gonzalez Torres, Edith Pinzon, Emily Pereda, and Emily Sanchez from Orange Glen High were awarded first place for their deconstructed apple pie dessert.

“We’re so happy to be able to host this again several years of not being able to,” said Orange Glen High Culinary Teacher Kristi Sovacool. “Yes, students learn how to cook, but they also learn valuable service and presentation skills through our classes, not to mention being able to earn their food handlers card, which helps many get part-time jobs.”

Each of the three high schools offers Beginning and Advanced Culinary classes as part of the Culinary Arts Career Technical Education (CTE) program. Students at Orange Glen High can also take an Advanced Culinary Arts and Restaurant Management Advanced Foods International Cuisine class. Students at each school are able to earn a food handlers card, which the Escondido Union High School District pays for.

In addition to culinary teaching classrooms, students at Orange Glen High have access to a commercial kitchen, which is where the competition was held.

Escondido High freshman Madyson Sprankles has been cooking at home with her grandmother since she could walk and is taking the Culinary Arts and Food Science class because she is passionate about cooking.

“I was surprised that we went from smoothies to souffles,” Madyson says of her experience in Escondido High Culinary Teacher Cynthia Gavin’s class so far.

For many students, the Culinary Arts and Food Science class is the first time they’ve cooked.

“I’m always surprised by how many students have never spent time in the kitchen and don’t know basic equipment,” said San Pasqual High Teacher Heather Holzauer, who has been teaching some form of home economics for seventeen years, including the last seven at San Pasqual High. “Cooking is a fun elective, a valuable life skill, and a potential career path.”

Culinary Arts is one of 35 unique pathways in nine industry sectors offered at Del Lago Academy and Escondido, Orange Glen, San Pasqual, and Valley high schools. CTE programs benefit students academically and teach technical skills that translate to postsecondary education and careers. Approximately one third of EUHSD students participated in a CTE class the last school year.

More information on the CTE pathways offered through the Escondido Union High School District can be found at www.cte-euhdsd.org.

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About Escondido Union High School District

The Escondido Union High School District has empowered students to graduate prepared for college, career, and life through excellence in learning for more than 125 years. The district serves more than 7,000 students across five high schools including: Escondido, Orange Glen, and San Pasqual, Del Lago Academy and Valley; as well as the Escondido Adult School. More than 900 staff members are employed by Escondido Union High School District, which offers more than 180 courses, including nationally recognized Advanced Placement courses, College & Career Technical Education, Independent Study, after school enrichment, career exploration, STEM opportunities, and more.