

# COLLEGIATE TIMES

## Amateur chefs invade Squires for cook-off

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As the clock slowly ticked toward 7 p.m., students in Squires Student Center noticed an exotic smell that couldn't be coming from Au Bon Pain or Sbarro. A combination of various foods from around the world created the unusual fragrance that wafted into the hallways of Squires from under the doors of the Black Cultural Center.

Inside the Cultural Center, hungry tasters anxiously waited for the chefs to complete the final last-minute preparations. When the vegetarian maki sushi found a place between the mojo chicken and the bibingka, the competition commenced.

These dishes, along with six others, were judged last night in the first annual International Cook-Off sponsored by the Theta Nu Xi Multicultural Sorority to raise money and simultaneously increase awareness about different cultures.

"(The sorority) wanted to fundraise and also educate people about other cultures," said Theta Nu Xi Publicity Chair Nikkie Eley.

Students registered favorite dishes from various countries for \$5 while tasters paid \$1 to sample all the entrees. At the end of the competition the tasters ranked the dishes based on aesthetics, creativity and presentation on a 15-point scale to name the 2004 Hokie Chef.

While the nervous chefs stood proudly behind their prized dishes, the tasters sampled and evaluated all nine entrees. From the beginning, some clear favorites emerged.

"At first I was leaning toward the tomato parmesan (from Italy), but in the end I voted for the Puerto Rican white spaghetti. It was delicious," said sophomore aerospace engineer Carlos Perez.

Others did not find the decision quite so simple.

"Everything is simply too good," said Theta Nu Xi Advisor Mary Campos.

Taken from recipes around the world, the entrees included: bibingka from the Philippines, chicken and beef chimmichanga from Mexico, vegetarian maki sushi from Japan, West African chicken jollof rice with vegetables, white spaghetti from Puerto Rico, Cuban mojo chicken, Nigerian plantain with special sauce and sausage, sweet pepper chicken also from Nigeria, and Italian tomato parmesan.

With the sampling complete and the last vote cast, the chefs gathered in suspense while the ballots were counted.

"As I announced the winners, you could clearly see how happy and excited the people who won were. That was my favorite part of the evening," said Theta Nu Xi President Diya Chauhan.

Chauhan started the announcements by awarding the second place winner, Chike Akah, a junior mining

engineer, a \$20 gift certificate to Kabuki's Japanese restaurant in Christiansburg for his plantain entrees from Nigeria.

"It is a family recipe that has been passed on from generation to generation. It's my grandmother's favorite," he said.

After a soft drum roll to increase the anticipation, Ruben Glover received a \$40 gift certificate to Kabuki's as the first-place prize and was crowned Hokie Chef 2004 for his chicken and beef chimmichangas. He explained that his motivation for the entr e stemmed from his heritage, as well as pop culture.

"I cooked the chimmichangas because I'm half Mexican and I learned how to make them from my mom. (Chimmichangas) also were appealing to me because they are famous because of 'Napoleon Dynamite,'" he said.

After the celebrations and congratulations ceased, the Theta Nu Xi sisters agreed that the event ran smoothly and was enjoyable for everyone who participated.

"It was a great night. It's good to get different people together. Hopefully next year we will have a bigger turnout," said Theta Nu Xi Vice President Shekila Lee.

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