



Beverly Bidney

Chef Lorraine Posada observes as Jenny Johns and Joann Osceola mix batter for cocoa zucchini muffins during a class at the Immokalee Culinary Accelerator on Nov. 7.



Beverly Bidney

From right, Rowdy Osceola and Johnny Jimmie man the stove as Chef Reshma Tannasee adds some seasoning. Osceola prepares pork loin; Jimmie sautés vegetables for a stir fry during a cooking class at the culinary accelerator.

Tribal members receive healthy cooking education at Immokalee Culinary Accelerator

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

IMMOKALEE — The Immokalee Culinary Accelerator is an incubator for culinary ideas and fledgling businesses who need some help getting off the ground. The state-of-the-art facility features cold and hot kitchens, bakery equipment, a massive freezer and refrigerator with ample storage space, a lab and office space.

But on Nov. 7, the facility was transformed into a classroom for 15 Tribal members who came to learn how to cook healthy meals. Sponsored by the Allied Health Department, five professional chefs worked with the budding chefs as they sliced and diced, measured and mixed and simmered and stirred a variety of healthy and flavorful dishes.

“November is National Diabetes Month,” said Suzanne Davis, the Tribe’s Allied health program manager. “We wanted them to prep and cook it themselves instead of just watching others do it.”

The chefs, including Tribal member Lorraine Posada, took the student cooks through the recipes, teaching at every step.

The menu included a citrus salad; another salad with romaine lettuce, gorgonzola cheese, walnuts and pomegranate seeds; roasted pork loin with roasted root vegetables; Benihana style hibachi chicken with brown rice; cocoa zucchini muffins; jam good gluten free cookies.

“We want to help and teach, no matter what level you are,” said Ruth Fehr, chef and the Culinary Accelerator’s business development manager. “We are here to help you learn today.”

The day of hands-on learning was greeted with enthusiasm by the participants, many who cook at home and were eager to learn how to eat more healthily. They worked diligently, listened carefully and improved their kitchen skills. In time, the recipes on paper began to emit the aromas of the luscious dishes they would become.

Before they began to prepare roasted pork loin with fennel, Chef Ahmed El, Culinary Accelerator program manager, taught a group of students about the

importance of “mise en place,” a French term that means putting everything in its place. Having all the ingredients needed for a recipe measured, cut and organized before cooking makes it much easier to cook, he explained.

Chef Daniela Craciun taught knife skills to a group tasked with cutting a large amount of vegetables; she showed them how to make it easier by not lifting the tip of the knife off the cutting board as they worked.

In the bakery kitchen, Chef Fehr demonstrated how to make gluten free cookies by turning oats into flour with the help of a blender. As the students mixed ingredients for cocoa zucchini muffins, Chef Posada explained why it’s important not to overmix wheat flour.

“It will get too dense and hard,” Chef Posada said. “You should add the wet ingredients to the dry and mix it just until it’s incorporated.”

Over at the meat station, Chef El showed students how to deglaze a pan and make a sauce with chicken stock. By steeping a few sprigs of rosemary in the sauce, the flavor is infused and the tough rosemary leaves don’t make eating the dish a problem for diners.

“Your food at home can be better with just a little garnish,” Chef El said. “Appearance and consistency is the number one goal at restaurants.”

As the food cooked and the deserts baked, participants reflected on the work they just completed.

“I learned about contamination,” said Lee Jumper. “You have to keep chicken and meat away from other things because you don’t want to contaminate the vegetables. I never knew that, at home I just mix everything together. I won’t do that anymore, it can make you sick.”

Charlie Tiger came to the class because he wanted to know how to cook a good and healthy meal. He cooks a lot at home, but wanted to know about healthier options.

“I learned about searing and using different seasonings,” said Tiger, We Do Recover program supervisor. “It feels good, we learned a lot today. Once we get clean and sober we have to make sure to eat healthy and take care of our bodies.”

When the luncheon feast was laid out



Beverly Bidney

Nicki Osceola watches the amount of oil being measured for a batch of gluten-free cookies.

on the buffet table, they all enjoyed the meal they created. Talk around the tables included a recap of what they learned as they cooked. One person pointed out that the fennel used for the pork loin was actually part of the onion family.

A few of the chefs addressed the group during lunch.

“I’m thrilled that you were here and learned something,” said Chef Fehr. “My goal is to inspire and move you and make a difference.”

“Medicine can improve your symptoms, but food can do more than that,” said Chef Craciun. “You should always prepare your food in a healthy way.”

Although the day’s lesson was over, some participants still had questions. The day’s menu included a lot of fall foods, such as root vegetables and pomegranate seeds. One asked about seasonality of food.

“Summer foods are fast growing and have more moisture to help you adjust to the heat,” said Chef Fehr. “Winter and fall foods are warming foods which help keep you warm.”

Chef Posada encouraged the participants will take the recipes home to their families.

“I hope we pass on to our kids that health is important,” she said. “We all have to have the knowledge to take care of our bodies.”

Immokalee Culinary Accelerator nurtures culinary entrepreneurs

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

IMMOKALEE — Reshma Tannasee has always had a passion for cooking. At one time she wanted to open a restaurant, but instead she started a farm and grew vegetables and hot peppers.

Tannasee, originally from Guyana, realized she didn’t like being outside in the heat all day, so she looked for another way to use the vegetables.

An overabundance of hot peppers prompted her to make her great-grandmother’s hot sauce, a recipe that had been handed down through the generations. Tannasee tweaked it a bit and added tropical fruits to give it a sweet and fiery taste.

She makes mild, medium and hot versions and uses mango and pineapple to temper the heat of the peppers.

She named it Carina’s Caribbean Hot Sauce, after her daughter, but needed help producing it commercially so she could market the sauce to stores and consumers.

In March, the Immokalee Culinary Accelerator celebrated its grand opening, which Tannasee attended. That decision changed her life.

The 5,274-square-foot Immokalee Culinary Accelerator is a state-of-the-art membership-based commercial kitchen which offers its members business assistance to help grow their culinary endeavors. In addition to the cold and hot kitchens, bakery equipment, cold and frozen storage areas, a

food nutrition testing lab and office space, the culinary accelerator provides mentoring.

Chef Christian Le Squer, a Michelin 3-star chef at the Le Cinq restaurant at the Four Seasons Hotel George V in Paris, will travel to the site a few times each year to mentor the culinary entrepreneurs.

The culinary accelerator also helps its chef/entrepreneurs navigate the Federal Department of Agriculture approval process, obtain a state license and get their products to market.

Tannasee needed help to get her recipes approved for commercial production. Three months after joining the culinary accelerator, she launched her brand and is off to a good start finding customers. In October she sold 800 cases to stores from Tampa to Naples. She makes private label sauces and her own brand, Carina’s, for groceries including Wynn’s in Naples, Publix and Fresh Market. Her sauce is in the approval stage to be sold in Whole Foods as well.

Her sauce success has led to other products she is trying to market, including jellies, guacamole and hummus.

“Being here is everything,” Tannasee said. “They gave me an opportunity to grow and help with the marketing. I couldn’t find this kind of service in any other commercial kitchen. If it wasn’t for this, I wouldn’t be able to make my sauce, jellies, guacamole and hummus.”

For more information about the Immokalee Culinary Accelerator, visit www.theimmokaleeculinaryaccelerator.com or call 239-249-5911.



Beverly Bidney

Nicki Osceola and Olivia Cypress worked hard on the tray of gluten-free cookies that are about to go into the oven to bake.

Renewable energy and sustainability conference to be held at NLC

FROM PRESS RELEASE

HOLLYWOOD — The second annual Seminole Tribe of Florida Renewable Energy and Sustainability Conference will be held from Feb. 5-7, 2019 at the Seminole Tribe’s Native Learning Center in Hollywood. The conference will focus on the newly changing landscape for tribal energy development and sustainability, including best practices, federal leadership, policy, and regulatory changes, funding a project, and project planning/development trends. The conference will give tribes and

First Nations an opportunity to explore the range of renewable energy and sustainability opportunities that exist and how to start the process.

Representatives from tribes, First Nations, nongovernmental organizations, and private industry will give presentations and provide training objectives on a wide range of topics, including:

- Resources to help with tribal energy projects
- Achieving self-sufficiency through energy planning and resource development
- Energy saving methods in design, development and construction

- Tribes undertaking large scale energy projects
- Developments driving change in the renewable energy and sustainability marketplace
- Tribal/private partnership opportunities
- Tribal case studies and lessons learned
- Funding sources for projects
- Leveraging available federal resources and materials to support tribes and TDHE/Housing Departments

A light breakfast and lunch will be provided on all three days of the conference.

There is no cost to attend the conference, however participants are responsible for their own lodging, dinner, and travel/ground transportation costs. Advance registration is required by Jan. 4, 2019. Because space is limited, attendance is capped at 100, and registrations will be accepted in the order in which they are received.

Registration is free for Native Americans/First Nations and those working within Indian Country.

For more information visit nativelarningcenter.com.

Honors for Hollywood’s Hard Rock

FROM PRESS RELEASE

HOLLYWOOD — The Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood has received the Award of Excellence from Corporate & Incentive Travel magazine for the fourth consecutive year.

The recognition is awarded to a select group of hotels, resorts and conference centers that provide meeting professionals and business conference attendees’ exceptional service, superior accommodations, outstanding meetings facilities and noteworthy culinary offerings.