

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

Kirby plans future in culinary art; Has early success

By Heather Mathew
of The Carlisle Mercury Staff
Although cooking may seem a chore for all those first working mothers, it is creating a work of art to adhere to.
One Nicholas County student was so creative she chose to spend the rest of her life in the kitchen, and has found success and satisfaction in her choice.

Pam Kirby, a student at The National Center for Hospitality Studies at Sullivan College, will be the first graduating class at the institution.

How did Kirby become interested in culinary art?
She said, "While at Nicholas County High School, I took Foods I and Foods for Special Occasions (now called creative foods) and also competed in D.F.A.R. Events at the Future Home-makers of America."

Because of her work at NCHS, Kirby received a scholarship from Johnson and Wells which is a reputable school for culinary arts students.

Kirby said, "Right when we was about to accept the scholarship, the brochure came in for Sullivan."

"They had so much more to offer than the outstanding chefs and all new facilities plus being closer to home, that the choice was obvious."

While the institution is young, the classes are tough.

"We start in Baking Shop I, Gerda Marger (old pantry) where we learn basic skills like yeast leavening."

"Next in Advanced Baking shop where we learn how to make center pieces, set up buffets on our own and catering."

Classes also include lab.

"The labs are from four to five hours every day so we not only learn how to do things, but learn why we do them as well," Kirby added.

Culinary Arts students have plenty of time to practice newly learned skills.

"We cook in the Production Kitchen which is not like any normal cafeteria because we serve everything from hamburgers to shrimp scampi and have fresh desserts right from the in-house bakery shop."

"We also team up with the hotel management and travel and tourism departments to do things for the school."

"Just lately we set up a buffet for a teachers and counselors meeting, put on a huge grand opening for the center, worked at Kentucky Derby Museum and Steve Clemens Catering, catered parties for Sports Illustrated, Chrysler Corporation and the winning party of the Derby," Kirby explained.

Aside from labs and practice sessions, students in the culinary arts must also take other classes.

"We take everything from sanitation and nutrition classes to food and beverage control, maintenance and design, all with a wide range in between."

There are also regular classes that we have to take like, math, English, foreign languages and computers," she said.

"There is also a wide range of ages at the center. Kirby said, "I am the youngest in the class of culinary arts, but we have people ranging from 18 to 60 years old, with sex being split about even."

Although Kirby is more than halfway finished, she has many steps to go before graduation.

"To graduate, you must have 200 or more off premises work and 200 on premise work hours and you cannot start until the third quarter."

she said.
The culinary arts team has recently had first hand experience with international cuisine and the rewards that go with how it feels to be successful.
Some of those on the team had had luck with travel.
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Candi Bates, one of our best had an absolutely beautiful pastillage centerpiece that had candelabras a quarter of an inch thick going up through the work.

Everything was fine even though we drove all the way, we got there and taking it in we went over a door casing and the whole thing shattered.
"She put her petit fours in where the candelabras were, and still got a Gold Medal work like that really gives you inspiration," Kirby said.
Kirby received another silver for her work with a different type of jewelry box and petit four display.

Others who competed included, Tim Hightower, Dorothy Dean Smith, Steve Vitell, Susann Mackie and Bob Strey.

Kirby added, "One of the great things about competing is the politics of prestige do not enter in decisions and everyone has a clear chance to win."

"You compete against standards, not against another, plus, no one knows who the winners are because they are not marked."

"So it's not your name, but your work."

The decision by the judges to allow the apprentice to enter the show proved to be a great one as the culinary team keeps the apprentice and post-secondary school category with two golds and three silvers, the most medals coming to one school.

According to friends and family, "Pammy" as she is known to most, will keep a cookin' her way to the top with will power and determination, but will succeed at anything she attempts in the hearts of all who know her best.

Where does the team find much of it's inspiration? Kirby said the team worked 54 hours in three days.

Getting ready for a show takes perseverance and determination as well as team work to complete team projects as well as individual works.

"When we work to get ready for a show, we stay in kitchen from 7:30 until 11:30 p. m. because pastries have to be prepared at the last minute because those critiquing our work want to smell the aroma as well as be impressed by the appearance."
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What is Kirby doing after so much success?
For the immediate future, Kirby and other members of the culinary arts team are giving extensive promotional interviews on radio stations and with various reporters to spread the news of the growing success of Sullivan's new program.

Upon graduation from the National Center for Hospitality Studies, Kirby will continue studying international cuisines on several cruises lines and hopes to travel to China as an apprentice.

The book for Sullivan is their job placement program - which is a guarantee upon graduation.

"Right now I want to taste a little bit of everything, really," she said.
"I want to be a Master Chef and a Master Pastry Chef."

"That is thinking big as there are only about 13 Master Pastry Chefs in the world (with one being at Sullivan) but I do not think you can ever learn enough," she said.

Kirby concluded, "Sometimes I like to complain, but I love what I do and have always had a tremendous amount of support from my parents, Denver and Bob Kirby and from the rest of my family."

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Kirby said, "My individual work was a jewelry box made of pastillage and latticework with flowers and cement on a top which could be removed," she said.

After doing so well in Cincinnati, the decision was made by those at The National Center for Hospitality Studies for the team to travel to Chicago for the Culinary Salon Competition held during the National Restaurant Association Show.

The NIA and the salon are recognized and endorsed by the American Culinary Federation and the Chef's of Cuisine Association of Chicago.

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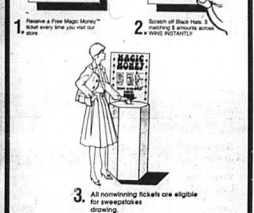
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