

Culinary summer camp crafts young chefs

FUTURE FOODIES OF AMERICA

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARY MCCLUNG



Culinary Campers practice their "mise en place" skills for an evening dinner served to family and friends.



Participants of Ivy Tech's Camp Culinaire learned a full range of kitchen and food prep techniques each day.

Remember camp? Some of us went to computer camp, some to tennis camp, some to that place with the lake and leaky canoes. Kids today do much the same, but with a new option: culinary camp.

As part of an effort to bring more food education to the next generation, the Hospitality Administration Department of Ivy Tech Community College held Camp Culinaire this summer. The mid-June event, designed for junior and senior high school students interested in learning more about food and future culinary careers, took place at the college's Indianapolis Corporate College and Culinary Center.

A summer tradition since 2008, Camp Culinaire is the brainchild of Chef Lauri Griffin, assistant chair of the department, and has been overseen and developed by Chef Allen Edwards, Ivy Tech's instructor of hospitality administration, each year since the beginning. The camp has become increasingly popular with the latest generation of food lovers, and is a great way to keep food skills honed or learn new techniques during those summer months when high school culinary classes are out. After all, no self-respecting junior chef wants a knife to rust from too much rest.

During the camp's first four years attendees cooked in two sessions each day, as there was only one kitchen lab and one baking lab available. As the years have progressed, so have the amenities; now there are multiple kitchens with the latest equipment, making this camp much easier and more productive to host and learn.

At this year's camp, about two dozen students from Indianapolis and regional high schools gathered for three days of learning and practice in culinary technique and production. Prior experience in the kitchen wasn't a prerequisite. Two levels of culinary training were



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CERULEAN IN THE LENAPE INDIAN CAMP

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4 — 6PM
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R BISTRO'S 100-MILE BRUNCH

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Chef coats and hats gave students a real feel for life in the culinary world.



Above: Camp Culinaire gave kids interested in food a chance to meet other future chefs and form new friendships. Below: Student participants had the chance to spend three days with several highly skilled and experienced chefs.



offered: one for those who hadn't yet wielded a chef knife, and a more advanced level for students with one or two years of prior culinary training in their high schools. For those who preferred the life of yeast and pastries, a Bake Shop Camp option was also offered.

Most culinary campers attended from Indianapolis Public Schools and township high schools, with a sprinkling of students from just outside the metro region. All looked professional in the Ivy Tech chef coats provided as part of the camp fee (along with a Mercer Knife or Baking Tool Kit—who wants to go to camp now?).

By mid-afternoon on the last day of camp, the young chefs-in-training were completely absorbed in culinary instruction. One group deconstructed chicken into parts, while two other students broke day-old French bread loaves into future crispy croutons. During the slicing and dicing, Chef Edwards showed two of his students how to prepare and use the kitchen's high-tech smoker so they could prepare chicken to go with other dishes being created for that evening's finale dinner, which would be served to fellow campers, family members and their guests.

Camp cooks took time out to visit Ivy Tech's on-site garden, where they harvested herbs, salad greens and edible flowers to use in preparation of courses later that day. Some training involved going the extra mile in making food and handling ingredients.

"We introduce them to our recycling and composting operation, and most of them are excited about it," said Chef Edwards, "especially about composting back into our own garden."

When asked about future plans, many camp attendees talked about attending culinary school after they graduated from high school culinary programs. Their love for the science and art of food was evident. Chef Edwards finds that while some students are planning to study culinary arts at various places, such as the Culinary Institute of America (his alma mater), many of his students plan to pursue one of Ivy Tech's highly respected culinary degrees. This is a smart option for those who want a top-quality culinary education for a low state-tuition price tag. ☺

For more information about Ivy Tech's culinary programs, visit IvyTech.edu/hospitality.

Mary McClung resides in Indianapolis and is senior at Herron School of Art & Design, completing her BFA in photography and intermedia. Her art and professional work includes photography and video. Mary's love for the slow, sustainable, farm-to-table culture manifests itself through her work photographing and promoting the food and the food community in the Indianapolis area.