

FEATURE – USDA HOSTS JOB CORPS TOP CHEFS COMPETITION

INTRO: Chefs from Job Corps centers across the nation took part in a cooking competition at the US Dept of Agriculture in Washington, D.C. USDA's Patrick O'Leary has more. (2:01)

AT A FARMERS MARKET IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL, FOOD SERVICE MANAGERS FROM THE NATIONAL JOB CORPS PROGRAM SEARCH FOR INGREDIENTS AND DREAM UP DISHES.

Trish Jones, National Job Corps Association: In "Top Chef" style, we gave them a hundred dollars to pick their ingredients to either make a side dish, an entrée or a dessert. And then tomorrow we will be going to USDA to actually do the competition.

Carl Smith: (How are you feeling?) Shaky, but we're going to win! (laughs)

THE COMPETITION IS A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY FOR THESE CHEFS, WHO PROVIDE MEALS FOR ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED YOUTH ON JOB CORPS CAMPUSES AROUND THE COUNTRY. THE PROGRAM ALSO FEATURES A VISIT TO THE WHITE HOUSE GARDEN.

Sam Kass, White House Assistant Chef: You see the pure message of understanding where food comes from; you have the ability to make the connections that will get kids engaged in what they're eating.

LATER AT THE US DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, THE CHEFS WHIP UP DISHES FOR A PANEL OF JUDGES. THE GOAL IS TO CREATE HEALTHY FOODS TO APPEAL TO JOB CORPS STUDENTS BACK HOME. MANY OF THE JOB CORPS CENTERS ARE OPERATED BY THE USDA FOREST SERVICE.

Judge: This is really nice.

Kathleen Merrigan, USDA Deputy Secretary: The Job Corps Training Centers, we're taking a whole life approach. It's not just learning a particular skill, but it's learning about healthy lifestyles. It is front and center, what our First Lady is talking about in the Let's Move initiative. And overall, nationally, there's a real interest in Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food. And so what we saw today was chefs going to farmers market, buying fresh produce and bringing it to the table in creative ways.

Job Corps Chefs: So we took 3 different kinds of apples...we seasoned the chicken very lightly...and added curry...chives, the lime...brown sugar with the cinnamon and cloves...

Judge: This is a really interesting twist. I like it!

THE WINNING ENTRIES HERE COULD END UP ON DINING TABLES AT JOB CORPS CENTERS, WHICH SERVE MORE THAN 60,000 STUDENTS EACH YEAR.

Ashley Bowen: They actually took a lot of time out to think about the nutritious things that we can offer our center and I think that the students will really like these things.

IN WASHINGTON, D.C., FOR THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, I'M PAT O'LEARY.