



San Diego Continuing Education Culinary Arts Program



Overview and Origins.

The Continuing Education (CE) Culinary Arts Program has sought to fill a critical niche in the San Diego community since its inception eight years ago. An analysis indicated a student population who would benefit from a ground level view of the culinary industry that did not require a significant commitment of time or money.

The perceived need to gain useable skills, find work, support families, and achieve those goals in a timely fashion has been at the forefront of designing the CE Culinary Arts Program. Prior to 2002, CE's Food and Nutrition courses were stand-alone courses that covered nutrition, menu-planning, catering, baking and pastry, and economical meal preparation.



A 600-hour culinary arts curriculum was developed in response to a request from St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Charities. The resulting collaboration between St. Vincent de Paul and CE enabled students to complete 300 hours in culinary arts theory and 300 hours of hands-on culinary arts food preparation. The hands-on component involved preparing food items to be served in St. Vincent de Paul's free-meal program. In addition, St. Vincent de Paul offered a practicum of 200 hours, giving students the opportunity to work in hotel kitchens and restaurants located in downtown San Diego.

CE continued to develop the culinary arts program over the next few years in a variety of venues that included the César Chavez Center and the Mission Bay Campus across from Mission Bay High School.

Current Culinary Program.

The current CE Culinary Arts Program is a no cost, 600 hour certificated vocational program. Potential Culinary Arts students are required to complete a matriculation process with counselors at the West City Campus, where they are assessed to ensure minimum

levels of competency in English and math or are directed to CE basic skills classes to help them meet minimum requirements.



Along with a well-rounded culinary curriculum, Culinary Arts students are instructed in the practical aspects of operating their own culinary business ventures. Industry professionals are invited to speak to students. Field trips are designed to expose students to commercial enterprises and to create professional networking opportunities. Students also have the opportunity to obtain individual food handler certification, which is required of every food service worker in the county.

Opportunities for practical experience occur during the school year when culinary students cater events such as holiday parties and special events sponsored by the Associated Student Body, occasional faculty activities, and the annual CE Consumer Science Fashion Show.

The popularity of the program has grown and there is currently a two month waiting list for students seeking to enroll. An evening culinary program was initiated just over a year ago and a waiting list now exists for that program as well. To help accommodate this high demand, a program is now being offered in the old cafeteria on the ECC campus. A waiting list has now developed for this program.

Future and New Initiatives.

There is tremendous excitement surrounding the articulation agreement between the CE Culinary Arts Program and the Mesa College Culinary Arts/Culinary Management Program. This arrangement permits students who complete the CE program to receive 10 units of college credit when they matriculate into the Mesa program. This is an excellent incentive for students who decide they want to further their academic credentials after gaining confidence in their abilities to have success in the classroom, as well as the kitchen.



The scheduled December completion of a state-of-the-art Culinary Arts/Hospitality facility at the West City Campus is eagerly anticipated. The \$16 million, 36,000-sq.-ft. building will house the Culinary Arts program on most of the first floor. The facility will be divided into two classrooms with a demonstration kitchen, lecture hall/smart classroom with closed circuit demonstration monitors, and a production kitchen/lab.



Innovative course offerings to maximize use of the new West City Campus are already in the planning stages. Potential classes include personal and private chef training, catering operations, cooking for diabetics, and the possibility of food and wine affinities.

Topics also are being designed to target incumbent hospitality professionals working in the industry who want to get on the fast track to brush-up or develop targeted culinary skills.

The Culinary Arts program faculty, chair, and dean have explored the idea of operating a working Culinary Arts restaurant in downtown San Diego. However, for a variety of reasons, including CE student demographics, area restaurant competition, personnel constraints, funding, and other practical concerns, it was unanimously decided that the same kinds of experiences could be attained through practicums at a variety of restaurants and hotels in the area. This is much less risky and costly and has been working well.

A potential partnership is being explored that would allow advanced CE culinary students the opportunity to cater conferences for City College's new Corporate College facility. This would provide students interested in catering operations authentic experience, providing quality catering services.

Challenges.

San Diego Continuing Education offers the only no cost, high-end culinary arts programs in the county. The greatest challenge in offering such a program comes in the increasing costs of food supplies for the program. In 2008, a conservative estimate for food for the day and evening programs is \$20,000. Other cost considerations include a \$100-text book required for articulation with Mesa, equipment and items such as uniforms, tool kits (knives, etc.), and study guides that would significantly enhance professionalism. Acquiring revolving accounts with local wholesale food and equipment suppliers would generate tremendous savings and are being pursued.