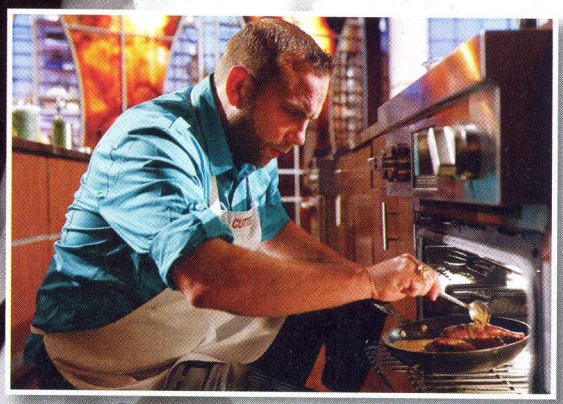
FEATURE BY ALLIE SPLETTER

Embracing Frisco's *Culinary*

Scene



The main ingredient in a Young Chefs Academy class is learning food preparation skills.
Cutter Brewer was a "MasterChef" season five competitor and is an executive chef at Ace's Ice House & Chop Shop. Provided by FOX Broadcasting Company.

At Young Chefs Academy, students learn valuable techniques to help them feel comfortable in the kitchen. Micah Goldstein looks forward to working in the culinary industry in the coming years(inset).

ALTHOUGH I have only technically lived in Frisco for four years, my heart has settled so deeply into this community that I sometimes believe I have lived here forever. Perhaps it is the outstanding school district, the small town feel or the pride I feel when I think of all Frisco is becoming, but I can undoubtedly say we are quite lucky to be a part of a city that is, in every way possible, making its way into the history books!

Along with its overwhelming and downright exciting economic growth, Frisco is quickly becoming a food lover's paradise and a mecca for those pursuing careers in the culinary industry. With Frisco's $5 Billion Mile, the addition of numerous restaurants and other exciting developments pressing on full-steam ahead, both potential and experienced chefs and diners alike should be nothing but ecstatic about the culinary opportunities Frisco has to offer.

Although, the preparing of food, cooking and baking is often left to the grown ups or head chef, Frisco is home to a special place that allows even the youngest culinary minds to express their creativity and learn their way around the kitchen. Frisco's Young Chefs Academy (YCA) is one of only three in the state! YCA offers cooking classes to children in a safe environment that encourages discovery and creativity. The main ingredient in a YCA class is learning food preparation skills. Each class adds a heap of kitchen safety, a cup of etiquette, a tablespoon of table setting, a pinch of menu planning and laughter to taste.

"Young Chefs Academy can absolutely help kids explore and prepare for their culinary future! We explore what it means to cook in a group, have responsibilities, resources, share, accomplish goals, plan and present," Nora Learner, a manager at YCA said. "These skills prepare a future culinary guru to work in a team or independently while opening up their minds to new techniques, flavors and dishes. Kids are more aware of food variety, food meaning, impact to self and others in the community. Kids get more involved in grocery shopping for their families, food planning and even in selecting the restaurant to go to!"

While honing their skills at YCA, kids not only learn culinary techniques and prepare great creations in a fun, hands-on environment, but also, through classes and cooking they use and learn so many other skills relating to lessons they might have learned in school. Math related skills include measuring ingredients, portioning servings, scaling recipes, etc. Students practice reading and language skills by carefully reading

recipes, labels and presenting plates. Most importantly, students learn so many things concerning culture! Students learn where things are from, origins, history, names, traditions, etc. "It is like traveling around the world with your palate!" Ms. Learner points out.

Of a normal day in the classroom, food blogger, photographer and YCA instructor Deepa Shankar, says, "We focus on several techniques, depending on what we are making on a particular day. We always teach proper measuring techniques along with knife and special tool skills. We also teach and remind kids of safety in the kitchen by wearing safety gloves, handling warm pots and pans and more."

YCA student Micah Goldstein's favorite restaurant is California Pizza Kitchen because of the vast menu and fresh ingredients. Mr. Goldstein looks forward to working in the culinary industry in the coming years. He shares, "I would love to be in the culinary industry. YCA has taught me how to be comfortable (and safe) in the kitchen so I can help my parents. I have learned how to measure things and chop things. I can now help them bake, grill, boil and sauté things. My favorite part about going to class at YCA is that I get excited each week to learn new recipes and techniques. I have fun with my friends."

Instructors and chefs at YCA are also encouraged and excited about Frisco's food services industry. The variety and level of growth in the surrounding area helps encourage students to prepare for their futures. Ms. Shankar explains, "In class discussions, we talk about local restaurants that focus on a particular kind of food. We go around the table and ask students what their favorite dish is from that type of cuisine and share ideas of how they would make it at home. Students are always eager and excited to share reviews and dishes from their favorite restaurants in the area!" Ms. Shankar recently enjoyed YCA's "Veg Out" theme, which focused on vegetables and teaching kids how to incorporate them in various dishes. In January of 2015, students made sweet potato donuts with a maple glaze that were a huge hit. The kids even got to try their hand at deep-frying."

YCA has had many success stories of students branching out to pursue careers in culinary arts and the food services industry. The organization goes to great lengths to offer guidance and direction for current students. YCA offers group after school enrichment cooking classes (once a week), private cooking classes (scheduled at a student's convenience) and workshops that are more specific and shorter than the regular once-a-week cooking classes. YCA is a great place for fieldtrips, birthday parties or summer camps.

Although her four-year-old daughter, Brynn, will not pursue a career in food services any time soon, Frisco mom, Lori Haarmeyer, recently held Brynn's birthday party at YCA. She believes her child greatly benefited from the experience. Ms. Haarmeyer recalls, "I really like the fact that it is kids-only once they go through the doors. I think it boosts their self-esteem and allows them to have an opinion. I think it is very important for kids to be able to see, smell and touch different foods in a safe environment."

Who knew preparing food could be so fun? At Young Chefs Academy, kids are encouraged to be creative.

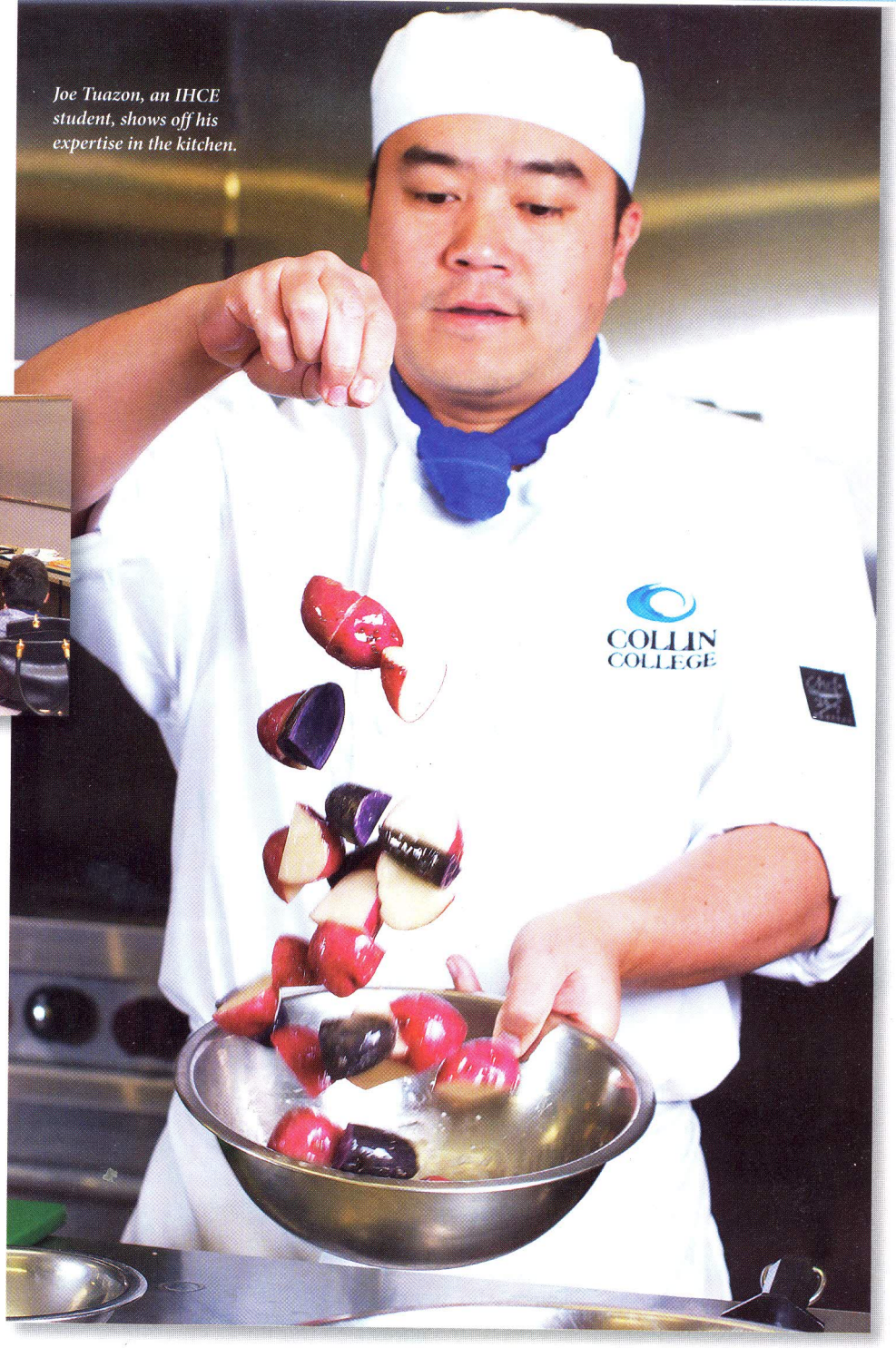
Not only is Frisco home to YCA, which instills a love for culinary endeavors in the youngest minds, it is also home to Collin College's Institute of Hospitality and Culinary Education (IHCE) program that offers a number of degrees and certificates to students pursuing careers in the hospitality and food services industries. By the end of their course study, students completing the Culinary Arts Program at Collin College are qualified for a variety of hands-on food preparation positions and career advancement in the food service industry (which is the largest private sector employer in the United States).

Although some students know the career path they want to take right out of high school, some students pursue careers in the culinary industry later in life. IHCE student Amy Kautzsch shares, "Across the classes there are students out of high school looking to go on into management, students who are changing careers or enriching their current career, some who are taking classes for personal

enrichment and some international students. Cooking and baking have always been a hobby, so at first, I was just looking for personal enrichment. After my first class, I fell in love. I found a group of people who love talking about, learning about and having fun with food. I found the classes to be a mix of traditional and non-traditional students, so I felt comfortable."

IHCE Student Joe Tuazon worked in the industry as a teen before a starting career in information technology. Mr. Tuazon remembers, "I began working in the food service industry when I was 16 years old. I was involved in many different aspects of the industry. I experienced different positions from serving customers, washing dishes, cooking, food prep and eventually management. After being away from the industry for more than two decades, the advent of Food Network reignited my passion in food. It became all the rage to be familiar with culinary terms like 'foie gras,' and 'demi-glace,' or 'consommé.'" He continues, "After 20 years in the IT business, my wife encouraged me to advance my knowledge in what I have always referred to as 'my stress reliever,' which is cooking. It takes passion to be successful in this industry. One does not simply jump from their well-entrenched and well-paying career to cook for a living."

Culinary student Linitta Lewis is seeking a culinary certificate in order to begin her own catering business. She has been cooking for years and wanted to turn her passion into profit. Ms. Lewis agrees that people choose the culinary profession for various reasons. "Some love to cook and others have been in the industry since high school. No matter the reason, now is the time to join the industry," she says. "It is progressive and forward moving. Food



Joe Tuazon, an IHCE student, shows off his expertise in the kitchen.

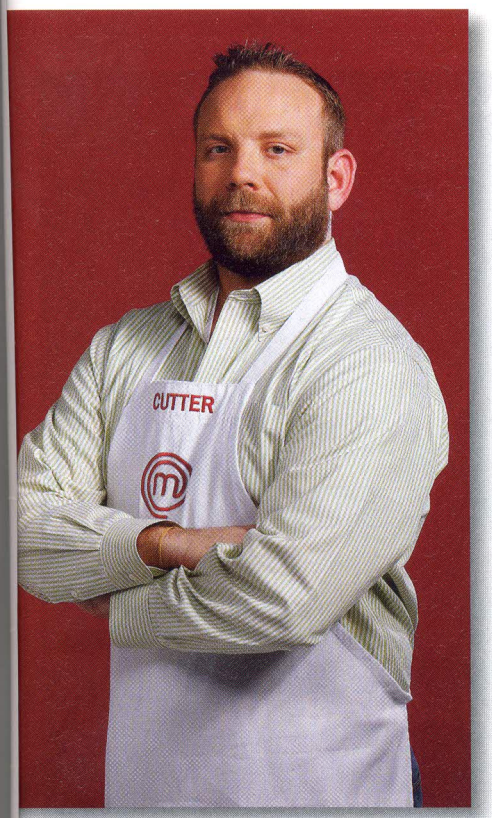
is viewed as a form of art and allows for creative expression." In addition to preparation in the industry, Ms. Lewis applauds the IHCE program for setting her up for ultimate success, even after the completion of her program. She shares, "The program is a stand out choice because it is affordable, class sizes are small and the college works with you to find employment. The department chair provides daily job leads to the student body." Mr. Tuazon adds, "The Collin County program provides students access to a professional kitchen, much like what you would see in a real restaurant. The chefs I have had the pleasure of learning under are knowledgeable and accommodating. Their years of experience in this industry prove to be an invaluable resource to culinary students who aspire to be successful in the food services industry." He continues, "Ms. Karen Musa, the department chair, provides students with resources in further developing their resumes with volunteer opportunities, career fairs and networking with different organizations outside of Collin College."

The IHCE program allows students the opportunity to choose various career paths

within the programs. While some may think so, the culinary field is not just about restaurants, whether working in or owning one. There are numerous opportunities in hospitals, senior facilities, hotels, schools and catering companies. Culinary graduates are not necessarily confined to the kitchen. Graduates can utilize the skills they achieved in restaurant management, purchasing and front-of-the-house opportunities. With so many varying avenues for IHCE students to take, it is easy to see how excitement builds at the prospect of future endeavors, especially in Frisco. Mr. Tuazon, for example, plans to open his own Frisco restaurant. He explains, "There is a growing Filipino population in North Dallas. I would like to provide comfort food to Filipinos who may be craving some of their favorite dishes. I also want to be a part of further diversifying the food choices in Frisco, offering visitors more than just burgers and chicken fingers." He adds, "I would like to open my own restaurant to run with my wife and kids, serving Filipino/American fusion cuisine. I would like to be a major contributor in making Filipino cuisine part of the American food lexicon." Alternatively, Ms. Kautzsch has been entertaining the thought of working with one of the community nonprofit groups to provide meals. "I would love to see a soup kitchen open and be able to work in that environment," she says. Ms. Lewis plans to use her education to teach others how cook. "I want to teach families that in the time it takes to drive to and go through a fast food line, you can have a delicious and healthy meal on the table," she shares. Ultimately, Ms. Lewis plans to open and run a commercial catering kitchen and business.

Cutter Brewer, a "MasterChef" season five competitor, has stayed true to the vision he created for his career as a chef.

As Frisco grows, the number of opportunities and the popularity of the ever-growing food services industry is only expanding! Ms. Musa, program chair and professor of hospitality and food service management at IHCE, explains, "As the City of Frisco has grown, so has the IHCE program. Currently, there are more jobs available than we have hospitality and culinary students. From full-service hotels to country clubs and restaurants, Frisco has a wide variety of opportunities for students to launch and grow a career." She continues, "We are a great resource for the community. We work with area high schools to help develop hospitality and culinary programs. We embark on service learning projects in the Hospitality Management and Leadership class." Mr. Tuazon agrees Frisco is a good place for potential chefs and restaurant owners, adding, "Frisco is experiencing explosive growth. The restaurant options continue to evolve and different corridors

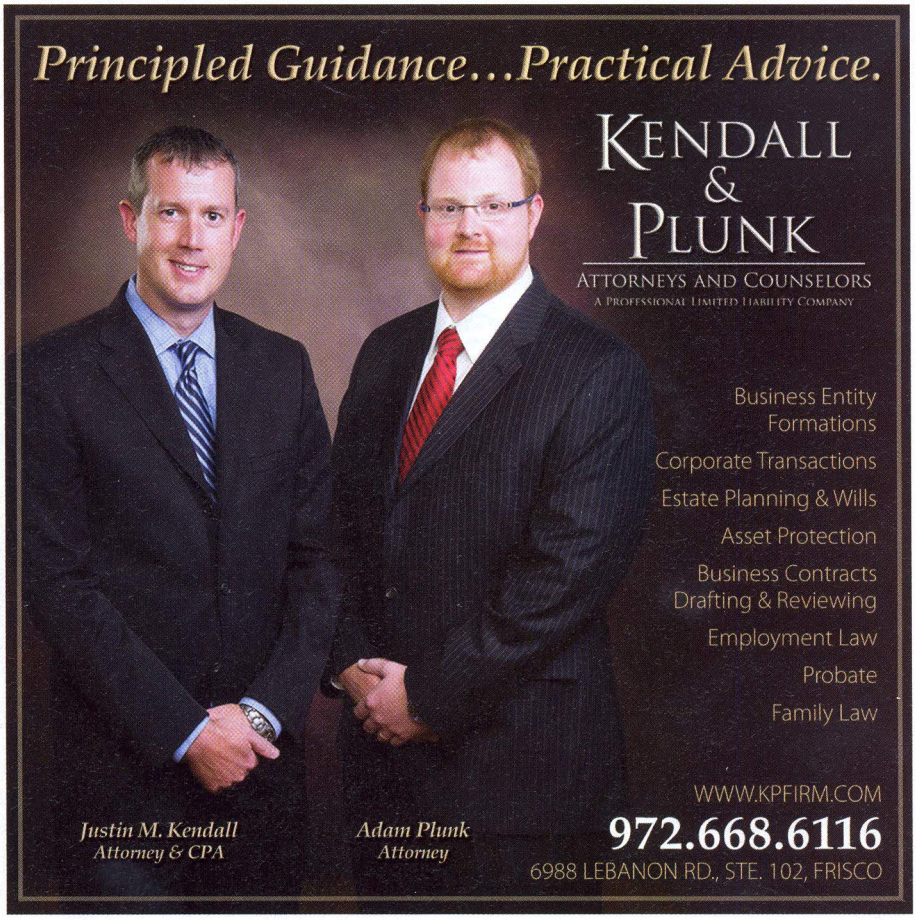


keep opening up offering various opportunities. The arrival of the Dallas Cowboys headquarters and brand new retail developments make Frisco a dining destination. We are seeing the arrival of different food establishments ranging from fast food to casual and fine dining options. This provides Collin College graduates plenty of opportunities without leaving Frisco."

From aspiring IHCE chefs to those who are a full-blown success, Frisco has recently become home to Ace's Ice House & Chop Shop where, along with Chef Brad Brown, executive chef and Fox's "MasterChef" season five competitor, Cutter Brewer, brings home a little Texas flare to the kitchen.

Mr. Brewer graduated from Hamshire-Fannett High School, joined the U.S. Navy, and served as a rescue swimmer aboard the aircraft carrier, U.S.S. Kitty Hawk, until 2004. During his service, he participated in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. In 2007, Mr. Brewer graduated from Lamar University with a bachelor's degree in business. Mr. Brewer competed in season five of the competitive cooking reality television show, "MasterChef," which stars celebrity chefs Gordon Ramsay, Graham Elliot and Joe Bastianich. He finished the competition in the top four.

Of his history in the culinary industry,



Mr. Brewer shares, "I have been in the restaurant industry for about 12 years. I have spent time in various positions with many restaurants. Cooking was always a passion of mine. I wanted to be on "MasterChef," so I gave it a shot. It was an excellent opportunity to develop and enhance my skills. I got to spend time with excellent chefs like Gordon Ramsay and Graham Elliot. My inspiration has always been local Dallas chef, Kent Rathbun. The co-executive chef at Ace's Ice House & Chop Shop, Brad Brown, has always been someone I have enjoyed spending time with in my career. We have partnered with a local chef named Adrian Estrada to develop a really exciting menu for the restaurant."

After having lived in Beaumont, Texas, Mr. Brewer is excited at the opportunity he has been afforded to work in and be a part of Frisco's expanding culinary scene. He explains, "Frisco is one of the fastest growing cities in the United States. The expansions in the community are offering new opportunities to chefs who want to develop their skills and career. The community is hungry for new concepts and styles." He adds, "Managing partner Jonathan Collura found the location. He wanted to bring something unique and different to the community. He is an avid fan of "MasterChef," and felt that my Texas style would be an excellent fit for his concept. He called and discussed his focus with me, and it fits what I am passionate about."

Mr. Brewer offers words of wisdom to aspiring and up-and-coming chefs. "Take chances and stay true to the vision you have created." He recalls, "I would also say, as a chef, teamwork is really important in accomplishing what you want. You know you have a good team when you have so many passionate people at the table."

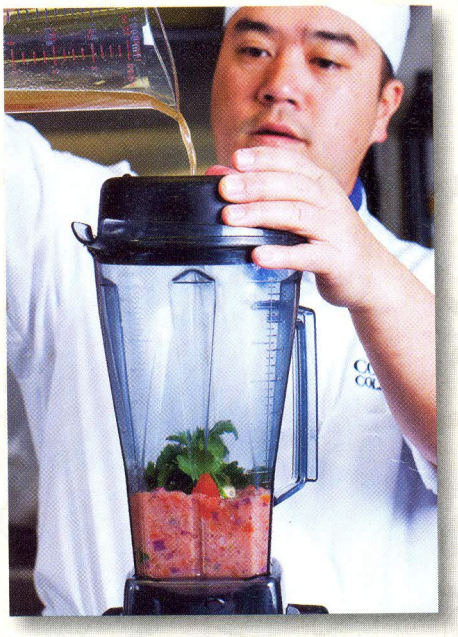
Ace's Ice House & Chop Shop is a new style of bar and grill. Mr. Brewer explains, "We want to focus on establishing the restaurant as a community staple and then look to expand. A lot of people have asked about new locations and it is exciting to have as much interest as we do at this time." He continues, "I am hoping my influence on the menu will bring something unique and different to Frisco. We want to provide a welcoming and family-friendly environment for our neighbors. I hope Ace's Ice House & Chop Shop is a local restaurant the community thinks of when they want to dine and spend time with good company."

Of his personal favorite dishes, Mr. Brewer loves a good Texas grass-fed steak or Graham Elliot's lobster corn dog. His favorite restaurants include Jasper's, Tei Tei and Nick & Sam's.

The opportunities are vast, the flavors are bold and the menus are innovative and ever changing in Frisco. From mom and pop restaurants to five star dining experiences, Frisco is quickly becoming a gastronomic destination for diners, aspiring chefs and experienced chefs. If you have dreamed of a career in the culinary industry, Frisco is the place to be!

Does your child like to be creative in the kitchen? YCA is located at 9350 Pasadena Drive, Suite 300, in Frisco. For more information or to view a class schedule, visit youngchefsacademy.com. For more information on Collin College's Institute of Hospitality and Culinary Education program, visit collin.edu. "The Red Room Dining Experience," hosted by the culinary class, is open to the public on Wednesday nights. Email redroom@collin.edu for dates and menus. Ace's Ice House & Chop Shop is now open. It is located at 9250 Dallas Parkway, Suite 130, in Frisco. For more information, visit acesicehouse.com.

Allie Spletter is a Frisco teacher and coach who enjoys freelance writing.



Recipes from our Contributors

Italian Beef Sandwiches

AMY KAUTZSCH – IHCE STUDENT

5-6 lb. rump roast
1 (12 oz.) jar green olives
1 (16 oz.) jar sliced pepperoncini
1 (16 oz.) jar cherry peppers
6 cloves garlic
2 Tbsp. dried basil
2 Tbsp. dried oregano
1 tsp. black pepper
1/4 tsp. red pepper flakes
1-2 c. beef broth
crusty bread rolls

Place the meat in a large crock pot. Pour in the olives, pepperoncini and peppers along with the liquid. Add garlic, basil, oregano, pepper and red pepper. Pour in enough beef broth to cover the meat. Cook on low for 8-10 hours (or on high for 5-6 hours). Pull the meat out and shred it on a cutting board. Place the meat back in the liquid. Serve the meat on toasted rolls.

Chicken Adobo

JOE TUAZON – IHCE STUDENT

1 whole chicken (cut into 8 pieces)
1 c. white vinegar
½ c. soy sauce
2 Tbsp. oil
4 garlic cloves, chopped
1 bay leaf
1 Tbsp. whole black pepper
1 medium onion, sliced

Combine all of the ingredients (except for onions) and marinate for at least 30 minutes. Put the mixture in a pot and bring it to a boil. Boil for 30-45 minutes, until the chicken pieces are cooked. In a medium sized pan, sauté the onions in oil. When the onions are tender, add the chicken along with all the juices. Simmer for 10 minutes then serve with rice.

Sopapilla Cheesecake

DEEPA SHANKAR – YCA INSTRUCTOR

1 can refrigerated crescent rolls
1 (8 oz.) pkg. of cream cheese, softened
1 c. sugar, separated
1/2 tsp. vanilla
3 Tbsp. butter
dash of cinnamon

Preheat your oven to 350 degrees and lightly spray the bottom of the baking dish with nonstick spray. Open the can of crescent rolls and separate them into two equal portions. Roll out one portion and place it on the bottom of your baking dish. (Add a little flour to your rolling pin if it is sticky). Mix the softened cream cheese, 1/2 cup sugar, vanilla and dash of cinnamon. Spread the mixture over the crust. Roll out the other portion of crescent rolls. Place them on top of the cream cheese mixture. Carefully melt the butter in the microwave and stir in 1/2 cup sugar. Pour the mixture over the top and sprinkle with cinnamon. Place your creation in the oven for 25-30 minutes. Let the cheesecake cool for 30 minutes before eating.

Treacle Scones

KAREN MUSA – PROGRAM CHAIR & PROFESSOR AT IHCE

2 c. all-purpose flour
¼ c. firmly packed dark brown sugar
2 ½ tsp. baking powder
½ tsp. baking soda
¼ tsp. ground cinnamon
¼ tsp. ground nutmeg
¼ tsp. salt
¼ c. currants or raisins
¼ c. unsalted butter
2 Tbsp. treacle or dark molasses
¾ c. buttermilk
melted butter
sugar

Preheat your oven to 425 degrees. Sift the flour, brown sugar, baking powder, baking soda, ground cinnamon, ground nutmeg and salt into a large bowl. Add the dried currants or raisins. Melt ¼ cup unsalted butter with the treacle or molasses in a small saucepan over low heat. Combine the treacle or molasses mixture with buttermilk and pour into dry ingredients. Mix the dough until it is roughly blended. Gently knead the dough on a floured surface until smooth (about 25 turns). Divide the dough in half. Pat out each dough piece into a five-inch diameter round. Cut each round into four wedges. Transfer dough wedges to un-greased cookie tray, spacing them two inches apart. Brush them with melted butter then sprinkle with sugar. Bake until the scones are just firm to touch (about 20 minutes). Serve the scones hot, ideally with strawberry jam and a dollop of clotted cream.

Argentina Empanadas

NORA LEARNER – MANAGER AT YCA

Pastry:
3 1/2 c. flour
2 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. salt
1/2 c. butter, chilled & cut into 1/2" pieces
1/2 c. vegetable shortening
7 Tbsp. cold water

Filling:
1 med. potato (microwave for 2 min. & cool)
1/2 Tbsp. olive oil
1/2 onion, chopped
1/2 lb. pre-cooked beef crumbles
1 Tbsp. beef broth
1/2 tsp. chili powder
1/3 tsp. ground cumin
1 egg white
1 Tbsp. water

Make the pastry by mixing the first three ingredients. Cut in shortening and butter until the mixture resembles a coarse meal. Add enough cold water for the dough to come together and form a ball. Knead until it is smooth. Let it rest for 10-15 minutes. Grate the potatoes and set them aside. Sauté the onions in olive oil. Add potatoes, ground beef, broth and spices. Cook until the ingredients are soft. Preheat your oven to 400 degrees. On a lightly floured surface, roll the pastry to 1/8-inch thickness. Using a biscuit cutter, punch out rounds. Spoon about two tablespoons of the filling in the center of each. Fold the pastry in half and seal the edges, crimping with a fork. Make egg wash by mixing the egg whites and water. Brush the tops of the empanadas with egg wash. Bake for 15-17 minutes.