



## **Bridgewater State University Bridgewater, Massachusetts Dining Services**

### **SCHOOL**

Bridgewater State University, public 4-year university, 11,000 students, Bridgewater, Massachusetts.

### **ABSTRACT**

In the pursuit of advancing the notions of clean cooking with sustainable food sources, the Center for Sustainability at Bridgewater State University hosted a “Top Sustainability Chef” cooking competition in the spirit of classic cooking shows such as “Top Chef” and “Iron Chef.” The event was held to coincide with other Sustainability/Earth Week events in April 2012. Three contestants from the campus community competed to prepare a meal in a 30-minute timeframe. Each contestant created a dish for the three guest judges using a key not-so-secret clean food ingredient (organic mushrooms) and other organic ingredients of their choice. The three participants received a copy of one of the guest judge’s cookbooks.

### **GOALS AND OUTCOMES**

#### **Goals**

The main goal of the “Top Sustainability Chef” competition was to encourage students and other members of the campus community to consider the source of the food they choose and consume. Another goal was to demonstrate how easy it is to prepare healthy and nutritious meals with locally grown, organic items. The last goal was to create a meal in 30 minutes or less that was delicious, visually pleasing, and original (based on judges’ evaluations). Future goals include inviting students to compete in the competition, with the hope that their interest and excitement for organic and locally grown food will spread to other students and their families.

#### **Accomplishments and Outcomes**

The goal of educating campus community members about the ease at which healthy, organic and sustainably grown food items can be incorporated into every day meals was met. The event was held in a cafeteria on campus during lunchtime, and there were over 300 students having their lunch during the competition. Many of the students were intrigued at what was going on, and were excited to see how the food was being prepared. Some students wanted to know how they could get involved. Regarding creating a meal in under 30 minutes that was delicious, visually appealing, and imaginative, all of the participants were successful. The judges were able to award up to 10 points for taste, five points for plating, and five points for originality. One winner was chosen for the entry of raw corn and avocado soup.



To ensure another successful event in the future, it would be ideal to have students, local chefs, and authors who work with 'clean food' as judges. To create a more exciting event, students could compete against their professors or even against local chefs.

This project positively impacted the environment and the campus community since it brought awareness to those in attendance about sustainably produced foodstuff. Part of the success of this competition was having a well-known cookbook author as one of the guest judges. Her attendance brought a lot of excitement to the event, as she is a 'clean food' chef and has published numerous books on 'clean food.' Her knowledge complimented that of the other two guest judges who were faculty members.

### **Challenges and Responses**

There were very few challenges associated with putting on this competition. The competition was supported by the Center for Sustainability and dining services. One minor challenge was that the participants were responsible for bringing in their own food and cooking supplies. The only items provided to them were a table and stovetop. In the future, we would like to have all of the food and cooking utensils on hand for the participants.

### **Campus Climate Action: Your School's Carbon Footprint**

This competition directly addresses climate change because it encourages the campus community to consider where their food is coming from (the distance that it travels to get to their grocery store and the way in which it is grown) and also the ease at which delicious food can be prepared at home. During the event, the cooking competition participants explained where their food came from, and also told how those in the audience could prepare the same meals at home. Commentary was also made about the benefits of 'clean food.' While we did no formal surveys after the event, based on student comments, they were enthused and realized that many of these meals could be made at home with ingredients obtained from the local farms they pass when driving to campus.

### **Commentary and Reflection**

With the popularity of cooking shows and competition reality television series, this competition was a fun way to get campus community members excited about locally grown, organic foods. The three different recipes (Thai chicken curry, asparagus and mushrooms, and raw corn and avocado soup) showcased a wide array of different foods and ways of preparing them that would please a plethora of palates. This type of competition was ideal since everyone has to eat, and this was a wonderful way to introduce students to this type of cooking.

The event was held in a dining hall/cafeteria on campus during lunch time because of the amount of space the participants would need to prepare the food. However, this location turned out to be perfect since students were able to observe the participants prepare the food as well as interact with them as they cooked. We believe that this piqued their interest in the topic.

## **ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT**

### **Leaders and Supporters**

The Center for Sustainability (Coordinators: Dr. Deniz Leuenberger and Dr. Ryan LaBrozzi) sponsored this competition. Mr. Eric LePage (Director, Computer Support Services) was directly involved in ensuring the success of this competition; not only did he come up with the idea for this competition, but he was also

a key figure in organizing it. We would also like to thank the judges (James Hayes-Bohanan, Arthur Lizie, and Terry Walters) and participants (Sandra Clark, Sarah Hogue, and Ross DeLuca).



### **Funding and Resources**

The Center for Sustainability at Bridgewater State University funded this event. The cost of the competition was just over \$1,150. This cost included the honorarium for the guest judge, the cost of reimbursing the participants for the food that they used, and the purchase price of the cookbooks that were given as prizes to the three participants.

### **Education and Community Outreach**

This campaign mainly focused on reaching campus community members. However, it was advertised on the Center for Sustainability's

website, and was open to all members of the community. In the future, we will be certain to advertise this event more widely for the community at large.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

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## **MORE ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL**

### **Campus Sustainability History**

The mission of the Center for Sustainability at Bridgewater State University is to advocate for the integration of sustainability principles in the core educational Bridgewater State University mission: teaching and learning, research, campus operations, and regional outreach. In the summer of 2007, the university became one of the charter signatories of the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment. As a signatory, we join over 400 other institutions in conducting a comprehensive greenhouse gas inventory, undertaking tangible, short-term efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and developing a long-term plan for campus climate neutrality. As we move forward as a university, a number of our buildings are either LEED certified or in the process of being LEED certified. BSU also participates in RecycleMania, and in 2012 placed 4<sup>th</sup> out of 14 schools in Massachusetts, and 76<sup>th</sup> out of 179 in the Waste Minimization Category. Our greenhouse gas reductions in an eight week period were 119 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalents. The campus also participates in a Residence Hall Collection drive in which unwanted items left in the residence halls are donated to either the local food bank or the state hospital. In the spring of 2012, 1017 food items and 1635 non-food items were donated to the local food

bank and state hospital, respectively. The website for the Center for Sustainability at Bridgewater State University can be found here: <http://www.bridgew.edu/sustainability/>

Image Credit: Ryan LaBrozzi, Assistant Coordinator of the Center for Sustainability, Bridgewater State University