

Culinary Arts: A Passion for Food and for Learning

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The famous and lovable chef, Julia Child, said, “Find something you're passionate about and keep tremendously interested in it.” For her first 32 years, Chef Child said she only ate food, but her world opened up when she began to learn to prepare food. There are many examples of people finding their career passions late in life and we take joy in that, but if a young person is given opportunity to explore their interests during their high school years, it is likely that they will find their niche – and their passion – earlier.

Culinary Arts teacher Amber Moore, known to her students as Chef Moore, had her revelation fairly early. She was a student at Lincoln University taking business classes and working part-time in a state department.



Chef Moore said, “I came to a point where I knew this was not the direction for me.” Shortly after, she took a job in the bakery at the newly opened Schnuck’s. Not long after that, she met Chef Dennis Bahm at Capital Plaza and he began to mentor her. She found a culinary school in Florida, earned her accreditations, and began a career in the world of food preparation.



She found her passion and she wanted to share it: “I love teaching and have had some great mentors along the way. I said, ‘I’ve got to pass this on’.” She began teaching short courses and eventually taught in an academy high school in Florida. Chef Moore found her way back to JC and heard that JCHS moving to the academy model and was opening a culinary program. Moore applied and was hired for the position.

Today students in Chef Moore’s class are not only learning to cook, they are gaining important 21st century skills that will help them in life regardless of what they do in the future.

Student Princess Luckette comes by her love of cooking naturally as her mother is a chef. Princess said, “I like that I am learning things I will use in my life. Making quick and easy

meals that fill you up and are nutritious.”

Students pointed that there are elements of other courses that make their way into the culinary classes. Students study the different cultures from around the globe in World Foods and math is applied daily in the preparation of food whether it’s by the measuring cup or by determining the cost to prepare a particular meal.

Equally important to the traditional coursework, students in the Culinary Arts classes must apply *the Four Cs: Collaboration, Communication, Creativity and Critical Thinking*. Some of the Four Cs are more obvious than others. Students pointed out the hands-on nature of the class and Hunter Robertson said, “Teamwork is really a big deal. We can’t do all of this by ourselves. Also, the hands-on aspect really works for me.”

In fact, collaboration and communication take place all of the time. The students are in groups and while each of them may be responsible for one aspect of the project, they help each other. Madison White shared that time is tight for a lot of the daily projects: “If someone in the group is moving slow, we help out. And if we aren’t communicating, then we won’t get it right and we won’t get it done.”



When asked if critical thinking was part of the classwork, students were a little stumped until it dawned on them that they had to work through problems all the time. For today’s lesson, students were making different types of donuts, one of which was an amazing maple glaze with bacon. They agreed that if the bacon grease caught fire or the donut glaze wasn’t fluid enough, they would have to find ways to manage the situation.

This culinary arts class will be more directly incorporated into the Academies next year, and most of the juniors and seniors in the class noted that they were not necessary moving towards a career in food preparation. At the same time, all of the students agreed that they were learning skills that would help them regardless of their chosen path, and it was clear to see that many of them were developing a passion for many of the things they were learning.



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