FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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ALABAMA HOSTING FIRST-EVER SKILLSUSA CULINARY CHAMPIONSHIPS

Montgomery, Ala. – Alabama’s best culinary students will be competing in Birmingham this weekend in the first-ever Alabama SkillsUSA Culinary Competition.

Our state’s most promising young chefs will be preparing their finest cuisine to impress a highly respected panel of elite professional chefs and restaurant executives from across the country. This competition is being held at Virginia College in Birmingham on April 9. It will be held from 8 a.m. until 1 p.m., on Saturday at the campus located at 488 Palisades Boulevard.

What makes this competition different from others is it gives students the chance to compete individually, and display their individual talents. Since 2006, there has been more than a 70 percent rate of growth in Alabama’s Hospitality and Tourism cluster.

“High school culinary curriculum and competitions are designed to develop the prominent culinarians for tomorrow’s restaurant and foodservice industry,” says Judy Brown, Alabama Career and Technical Education (CTE) Specialist and Culinary Arts Coordinator. “Today, Alabama has 56 Hospitality and Tourism High School Programs with over 7,000 students enrolled – 48 of these programs are Restaurant, Food, and Beverages programs (culinary).”

During this competition, every student will develop a detailed food preparation plan and must have all of their dishes ready within a 45 minute time frame. Current national statistics indicate the average salary for certified executive chefs exceed more than $75,000 annually.

“Alabama SkillsUSA is very excited to offer our First Culinary Arts event,” says Chris Kennedy, Alabama Technical Education Administrator. “The contestants will be rated on their organization, knife skills, cooking techniques, creative presentation, sanitation food safety techniques, and above all, the quality and flavor of their prepared items. This event is directly in line with the mission of SkillsUSA to empower students to become world-class workers and leaders.”

Each student will be judged on planning (making time schedules, organizing the work area, obtaining needed supplies) and overall food production. They must successfully prepare the following menu from scratch within the timeframe in order to advance to the national competition in Louisville, Kentucky in June:

- Cranberry Garden Salad with Raspberry Vinaigrette Dressing
- Beef Stroganoff with Buttered Noodles

Schools participating in this weekend’s state championship are: Central High School (Phenix City), Hewitt-Trussville High School, the Huntsville Center for Technology, Moody High School, Shelby County College and Career Center, Charles Henderson High School, Albertville High School, and Jefferson State Community College.

— more —
2016 Alabama SkillsUSA Culinary Competition
April 9, 2016

Scholarships for Students!

The Alabama State Department of Education now holds three culinary competitions annually – ProStart, the FCCLA Star Event Championships, and now the SkillsUSA Culinary Competition. Each is a wonderful event, which exemplifies national culinary standards and curriculum. Scholarships from these three competitions will total more than $700K this year.

The following well-known culinary institutions of higher learning will be awarding contest winners at the Alabama SkillsUSA Culinary Competition with prestigious scholarships:

- Virginia College
- Culinary Institute of America
- Johnson and Wales
- Mississippi University of Women
- Faulkner University South Baldwin County
- New England Culinary Institute

What Will Happen During the Competition?

At the beginning of the competition, all teams receive the official menu and ingredients to complete the meals. Each student has time to organize their work areas, supplies, and time management plans. Students have only 45 minutes to prepare the required dishes. To complete this enormous task, students must be well organized and knowledgeable of proper food preparation. The students will also be judged on using proper knife skills. They will demonstrate mastery of these skills through the detailed cuts that they will perform, such as the following:

1. Carrots, julienned (1/2 cup)
2. Onion, medium dice (1 ounce)
3. Apple, medium diced (1 apple)
4. Beef Tenderloin, medium dice (8 oz.)

At the end of the contest period, participants will present their completed dishes to the panel of professional chefs and nationally recognized instructors. This year’s competition judges are:

- Chef Antony Osborne - National Dean of Culinary and Hospitality Programs - ECA Colleges
- Chef Jessica Henry - MUW/Assistant Professor/Chef Instructor
- Chef Clayton Sherrod - Chef Clayton’s Food Systems Inc.
- Chef Paul Seery - Virginia College, Birmingham
- Chef Nicholas Hartman - Alabama Power, Market Specialist
- Chef Sharon Craig - Virginia College, Birmingham
- Chef McKinzie Harrison - Urban-Ministry

Organizations that have partnered with the Alabama State Department of Education to host this event are Mercer, Pearson, ECOLAB, the Alabama Cattlemen’s Association, Birmingham Originals, and Virginia College.

SkillsUSA is devoted to preparing students for postsecondary learning and careers in technical, skilled, and service occupations. Nationally, it serves over 300,000 high school, college, and professional members. **Alabama has more than 10,000 high school and college members.**

To learn more about the new SkillsUSA Culinary Competition, contact Alabama State Department of Education Culinary Coordinator, Judy Brown, at (334) 242-9561 or visit [www.skillsusa.org](http://www.skillsusa.org).