

1AD soldiers bring culinary delight to USAREUR competition

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GRAFENWOEHR, Germany - 1st Armored Division food service soldiers cooked up a winning team at the U.S. Army Europe Culinary Arts competition.

The 12 1AD soldiers, along with their team captain Chief Warrant Officer David Longstaff, represented the 104th Area Support Group at the competition. Together, they walked away with a total of 19 medals, proving that the division's soldiers know their business when cooking in garrison, the field or even a five-star restaurant.

"For this competition, the judges go by the American Culinary Federation standards," Longstaff explained. "Those are the same standards used in five-star restaurants and the Culinary Olympics. It's the worldwide culinary standard."

The USAREUR Culinary Arts Competition includes a month-long workshop that leads up to the competition. This year, the food service specialists rallied in Grafenwoehr, Germany, to improve and test their palate-pleasing skills.

"The Culinary Arts workshops and competitions are one of the few food service programs that really promotes what cooks do," Longstaff said. "These soldiers are used to preparing meals for 200. So, this is a great break from that."

During the workshop, the soldiers polish their skills on aspects of food service from soup to nuts. From designing centerpieces to preparing main entrees, the soldiers prepare meals fit for the finest dining. The workshop is vital, according to Longstaff. "Some of these soldiers come to this workshop not



Spc. Allie Pierce, a food service specialist assigned to the 501st Military Intelligence Battalion, prepares a platter of green beans to be served. Pierce competed in the culinary arts competition for the first time this year.

knowing anything about culinary arts, but by the end of it, they may walk across the stage with a medal.

"Whoever has prior experience and can get down there [to the workshop] and help them, does," Longstaff explained. "I have a boat-load of experience, so I ended up being the advisor for the 104th ASG team."

For Spc. Juan Rodriguez, competing for the first time this year was an exciting experience. Rodriguez, a food service specialist assigned to the 1st

Battalion, 1st Cavalry Regiment, in Buedingen, was looking for a challenge.

"I wanted to do something exciting, challenging. And then, I saw those culinary arts books," explained Rodriguez, who earned a bronze medal in the "three-course meal" category this year. The Los Angeles County, Calif., native said he learned a lot from the workshop.

The workshop, like many Army schools, uses the "train-the-trainer" approach. "They use a lot of what they

learn in their day-to-day duties. They learn things like general garnishing techniques and how to display food," Longstaff explained. After the competition, the soldiers return to their home-station dining facilities and share their newly acquired skills with their fellow food service specialists and the dining facility's patrons.

"I learned a lot about time management when preparing food," said Rodriguez, 21. "I also learned about presentation. People taste with their eyes. The food has to look glorious." Rodriguez was one of eight soldiers on the 104th ASG team that competed for the first time.

Spc. Allie Pierce, a food service specialist assigned to the 501st Military Intelligence Battalion, also competed for the first time this year.

"I learned how to make things go faster. There are certain tricks to making prep go faster," said the 24-year-old Vancouver, Wash., native. "I learned that you can make something amazing and it takes no time at all." Pierce, who claims her specialty is preparing desserts, won silver medals in both the "four-plated dessert" and the "centerpiece" categories.

"[Chief Warrant Officer] Longstaff made the difference," Pierce said. "He made the whole thing go well."

The next level of the competition will be held at Fort Lee, Va., in February and March. Two 1AD food service soldiers have earned positions on the eight-person USAREUR team: Spc. Jousa Rine of 1st Battalion, 35th Armor Regiment, and Pfc. Scott Graves of 47th Forward Support Battalion. In addition, Longstaff has been selected as the USAREUR team captain.

"The whole idea behind this is to equip soldiers with new ways to be creative and enhance the meal," Longstaff said.

Winners

Spc. Adam Putnam, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Field Artillery Regiment, earned one gold medal.

Spc. Jousa Rine, 1st Battalion, 35th Armor Regiment, won two gold medals, was selected as the USAREUR Senior Chef of the Year and USAREUR Food Service Specialist of the Year and was selected for the USAREUR Culinary Arts Team.

Staff Sgt. Cary Brown, 1st Battalion, 94th Field Artillery (MLRS) Regiment, earned two silver medals. Staff Sgt. David Younts, Division Artillery, earned one silver medal.

Sgt. Michael Marcus, 2nd Battalion, 37th Armor Regiment, earned two silver medals.

Spc. Allie Pierce, 501st Military Intelligence Battalion, won two silver medals.

Pfc. Tina Green, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Division Artillery, earned one silver medal.

Spc. Juan Rodriguez, 1st Battalion, 1st Cavalry Regiment won one bronze medal.

Pfc. Scott Graves, 47th Forward Support Battalion, earned one gold, one silver and one bronze medal in the competition, was selected as the USAREUR Junior Chef this year and was selected for the USAREUR Culinary Arts Team.

Pfc. Irene Acosta, 16th Engineer Battalion won two bronze medals.

Pfc. Shannon Harris, 1st Battalion, 4th Air Defense Artillery Regiment, won one bronze medal.

Pfc. Jeffrey West, 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, won one bronze medal.