**Borealis Bistro puts UAF culinary arts students to test**

By Karalee Watts

There is excitement in the air on the first practice-run day for the Borealis Bistro, as tablecloths are arranged, silverware is wrapped in bundles and students don their serving aprons. In the back, food is being plated to perfection and drinking glasses are stacked in an orderly manner.

“Everyone must try these, unless they have an allergy,” said Chef Luis Martinez, as students gather around a table in the large commercial kitchen. An array of artistic desserts is on display, among them mango chutney ice cream and raspberry liquor mousse. Martinez, the class instructor, emphasizes the value of tasting food in order to provide informed descriptions and recommendations to customers.

This is a normal class day for students enrolled in two culinary courses, A la Carte Cookery and Food and Beverage Service, at the University of Alaska Fairbanks Community and Technical College. Lessons for these students include seating guests, taking orders, preparing menus and cooking a variety of dishes — all the duties required to run UAF’s full-service student-run bistro.

As part of the culinary arts and hospitality curriculum, the bistro is designed to give students a well-rounded, real-world restaurant experience by allowing them to practice menu planning, plate presentation, food preparation, hosting, table service, time budgeting and management.

Borealis Bistro runs every Thursday at the Hutchison Institute of Technology throughout most of the spring semester, with a unique theme to each week. Reservations are required because of demand, as well as the planning necessary for the learning environment. The $13 price includes an entrée, soup or salad, and a beverage. Appetizers, dessert and espresso are available for an additional cost.

In the past, the bistro has served intricate foods such as beef bourguignon, tangerine marinated duck, shrimp and oyster etouffee, and lamb tagine.

Recent culinary graduate Fabio Kerr participated in last year’s bistro and now works at two restaurants in Hawaii. He is working to open his own food truck this year.

“Participating in the Borealis Bistro was a great experience. I got to move around to all positions in the ‘restaurant,’” he said. “Some areas that I wasn’t comfortable being in were thrown at me and that made me a much better chef.”

In addition to the bistro, the UAF CTC culinary arts program will host its annual multicourse scholarship dinner on April 22. The dinner, which features Alaska food, will celebrate UAF’s centennial. All proceeds of the dinner go to a scholarship fund for the program. Tickets will be available closer to the date of the dinner.

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When: 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. through May 5, except March 16 (spring break)

Where: Hutchison Institute of Technology, 3750 Geist Road, Fairbanks

Price: $13 includes entrée, soup or salad, and a beverage. Add-ons are available such as appetizers, dessert and espresso.

Contact: Reservations only. Call 455-2902 or email kgaikows@alaska.edu.

Menu: Full menus will be posted shortly before the upcoming meal on the website: <http://www.ctc.uaf.edu/menu/> and on the UAF CTC Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/uafctc/>

***Spring semester schedule***

February 9 - Asian Inspired Cuisine

February 16 - Valentine's Day Menu

February 23 - Indian Inspired Cuisine

March 2 - Northwest Inspired Cuisine

March 9 - Tex-Mex Inspired Cuisine

March 16 – Closed (spring break)

March 23 - Italian Regional Inspired Cuisine

March 30 - Cajun Inspired Cuisine

April 6 - French Inspired Cuisine

April 13 - All-American Inspired Cuisine

April 22 - Scholarship Dinner

April 27 - Student's Choice Menu

May 5 – Buffet

*Cutlines*

*UAF photo by JR Ancheta*
Chef Luis Martinez, a culinary instructor at the University of Alaska Fairbanks Community and Technical College, provides detailed dessert descriptions to student servers.

*UAF photo by JR Ancheta*
Student server Faron Totemoff looks at a description of dessert options ahead of a Borealis Bistro service.

*UAF photo by JR Ancheta*
Culinary students at Borealis Bistro, a training program at the University of Alaska Fairbanks Community and Technical College, created these desserts.