



Photo by Tom Underhill

New York Food Co.'s kitchen manager Rick Campos tosses up a vegetarian pasta melange. Chef for a Day finalists will cook alongside Campos and his cooking crew.

What's Cooking?

■ New York Food Co.'s Chef for a Day Contest

By Carrie Yamato
Peninsula News

If you are hooked on shows like "Iron Chef" or "Naked Chef" and love concocting creative cuisine for family and friends, this contest is sure to whet your appetite.

New York Food Co. is offering one South Bay high school student the opportunity to

create a lunch menu and prepare it with NYFC's kitchen team. The lunch will be served for 100 guests and members at a Manhattan Beach Coordinating Council meeting on May 19.

"We wanted to do something to encourage the kids who are anxious to get their feet wet in our industry," said NYFC co-owner Jim Wharton. "It's a great way to give something back to the community and give something to the kids who may one day be our competition

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or work with us.”

Director of Corporate Development Michael Limas, who has been organizing the contest, says that even if kids aren't set on being the next Wolfgang Puck, they should give it a try.

“Before I started working [for NYFC], I didn't know anything about cooking. But I spent two years in the kitchen familiarizing myself with it and I literally fell in love with it,” said Limas. “So for kids who are kind of interested in it, it will give them an opportunity to see if it's something they want to do.”

Recipe for Success

The rules for the contest are simple. By the deadline date of April 12, submit two recipes — they don't have to be original — for a hot entrée and a side dish. A side dish can be an appetizer, soup,

salad or dessert. Then write two paragraphs on why you chose the menu and why you want to be the chef.

The judges say they aren't looking for anything gastronomically gourmet — just something that shows some thought and creativity.

“It's more about how much effort went into it,” said Wharton. “We want to see some creativity. I think we'll know it when we see it.”

After narrowing down the entrants to three, the finalists will spend an afternoon with NYFC's kitchen team in El Segundo and prepare their recipes for the final taste test.

“Part of the fun of this contest is working with trained chefs in a professional kitchen,” said Wharton. “Some people pay to work in a kitchen for a day. But it also gives aspiring chefs a jump-start on what they could expect in culinary school.”

In addition to claiming Chef for a Day bragging rights, the winner will take home a \$500 scholarship and

have the opportunity to intern at NYFC.

“If I were their age, I'd do it,” said Wharton. “What do you have to lose? It's going to be a blast.”

NYFC is a full-service catering company that also operates out of La Venta Inn in Palos Verdes Estates and Verandas in Manhattan Beach. For more information on the contest or to get an entry form, call 643-6151 or e-mail NYFC at infor@newyorkfood.com.