

D211 POST: PALATINE CULINARY ARTS STUDENTS COOK WITH UNIQUE INGREDIENTS



A panoramic view of all dishes created by a culinary arts class during a Cammos and Cooks practice at Palatine High School in Palatine, Illinois.

Students in Palatine High School's culinary arts class had the opportunity to create unique meals during class Oct. 5. The students practiced for a competition called Cammo and Cooks where cooks are challenged to create meals using various pieces of military Meals Ready to Eat or MREs.

Sgt. 1st Class Matthew Serowka, an Illinois Army National Guard recruiter, brought the MREs the students used. He said it was interesting to see what the students came up with and how the groups worked together.



Sgt. 1st Class Matthew Serowka from St. Charles, Illinois, a recruiter with Company D, Recruit Sustainment Program, teaches students about MREs during a culinary arts class at Palatine High School.

"It's great to see some of the groups really come together as a team," said Serowka. "Those teams are the ones that come up with some very creative dishes."

During the class, students were divided into teams. Each team was given a different MRE. Using that, as well as other minor ingredients from the kitchen, each team had to create a main dish, a desert, and a beverage.

Erika Varela, a culinary arts teacher at Palatine, said the students were not told what MRE they would get prior to the start of the challenge.

“I wanted it to be a surprise,” Varela said. “I am excited to see what they can do with these.”



Two students discuss options for their project during a Cammos and Cooks practice during a culinary arts class at Palatine High School.

Spc. Daniel Pelczarski, a cannon crewmember with Battery C 2nd Battalion, 122nd Field Artillery, joined Serowka to teach the students about the MREs. After sampling the students’ creations, he said the event was successful.

“It’s interesting to see the creativity of these students,” said Pelczarski. “MREs can be pretty basic.”

Junior Cody Weller echoed Pelczarski’s sentiment on how basic MREs can be.

“There isn’t a lot of variety with these,” he said. “That and added to the time limit makes this pretty difficult.”



Granger Russell, a junior at Palatine High School, samples applesauce from an MRE during a Cammo and Cooks practice at Palatine High School.

At the end, the students' dishes were judged by culinary students from Harper College. The top four students will be given the opportunity to compete at the Cammo and Cooks Challenge at Harper College Oct. 18. There they will compete against cooks from Harper as well as a team from the Illinois Army National Guard.



The winning team of the Cammo and Cooks practice are surrounded by the judges and Illinois Army National Guard Recruiters at Palatine High School.