

PALATINE HIGH SCHOOL CHEMISTRY OF FOODS STUDENTS' FIRST RESTAURANT DAY



Junior Alex Ayala sorts toppings for the pizza.

More than 60 students enrolled in Palatine High School's Chemistry of Foods class were working together to assemble their first large order of personal deep-dish pizzas since the school year started. Some rolled the dough, others were in charge of sauce and toppings, and with a lot of teamwork, they completed more than 120 orders for Palatine High School faculty and staff on Oct. 4.

With the assistance of teachers Erika Varela, Mark Langer, and Robert Heitz, and Palatine based Pizza Bella pizzeria owner Tony DeFilippis, students received a first-hand experience of what it's like to be in a restaurant kitchen.



Emily Seidl and Tony DeFilippis of Palatine's Pizza Bella thin pizza sauce with a little water.

“The best part of this class is that the students get real-world experience running a restaurant even though it’s still within the school environment so they have room to make mistakes,” Varela said. “Many students comment that this is the hardest they have ever worked in a class and many teachers comment that this is the hardest they’ve ever seen their kids work in a class.”

The class, which combines a traditional cooking class with chemistry, provides students with a well-rounded learning experience about the food preparation, the industry, and cooking. As a dual-credit course with William Rainey Harper College, students have the opportunity to study and test for their food safety and sanitation certification at the high school.

“I love seeing the kids get to learn chemistry and be able to apply it, because the biggest question they have is always, ‘when am I going to use this,’” Heitz said. “They jump into using chemistry right away.”



Pizza Bella owner Tony DeFilippis (center) helps juniors Chan Han (left) and Chaka Kelly (right) roll pizza dough.

Langer agreed that not only is the work experience great for students, it gives them a relatable way to look at chemistry.

“I like giving the real-world application to chemistry,” Langer said. “This is something kids deal with everyday – food.”

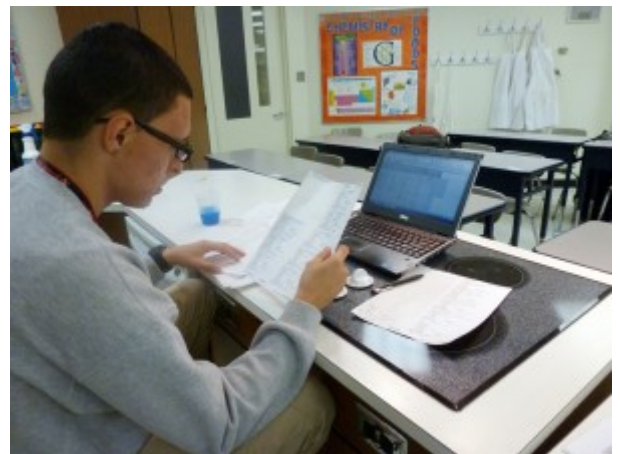


Tahkyra Whitaker and Karlee Darow chop vegetables for side salads that came with each person’s

order. Orders were \$6 each, and included a pizza, salad, dessert, and drink.

Each quarter, the class completes two food events, which doesn't necessarily mean they are restaurants. Varela said the first restaurant the class hosts is a carry out because it allows for more focus on food preparation without worrying about turning a classroom into a restaurant. In the future, students complete a sit down meal where staff members can sit down and have lunch.

"We try to get two meals in per quarter, and that can be tough during the first quarter because students are busy getting their food safety and sanitation certification program, which is new this year," Varela said. "Students earn dual-credit with Harper College when they successfully complete the course and pass their certification."



Frederico Patino, junior, sorts through customer orders the day before the class hosted the restaurant day.

If students do not pass their certification the first time through, they have an opportunity to continue the course and retake their certification test up to two times. If they haven't passed the test the second time, they will have to take the training again. Varela said it's rare for a student not to pass the certification test.

DeFilippis, who spoke to students about sanitation, entrepreneurship, and owning his own business, said it was great to help students learn about what it's like in the workplace.

"The students got hands-on experience making deep-dish pizzas, and it benefits the students because they are being hands-on and seeing what it's like in the workplace, and benefitting from know what can come in their future."

Watch the kids in action below!