



# A COMPETITION LIKE NO OTHER

U.S. teams and individuals gather in Erfurt for the IKA.

BY STACY GAMMILL

ABOVE AND OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: 1) Dark chocolate Bavarian and citrus plated dessert. 2) ACF National Culinary Team USA celebrates earning the overall gold medal in cold-food competition. 3) The national team's cold-food buffet platter. 4) National team's top-hatted petits fours for the cold-food display. 5) Alaskan halibut and king crab appetizer from the national team's hot-kitchen competition. 6) Youth team's edible buffet, pictured left to right: Stafford DeCambra, CEC, CCE, CCA, AAC, team manager; Lydia Ross, CSC; Megan Bamford; Anica Hosticka; Tracy Morris; Marco Olivares; Jesus Olmedo; and Shawn Culp, CEC, MBA, team coach. 7) Edible buffet items were presented to the theme of Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater design concept. 8) Youth team's carrot/coriander mousse, kohlrabi spiced carrot salad and spiced cracker for the edible buffet. 9) Left to right: George Castaneda, CEC, Corey Siegel, CEC, and Jason Hall, CMC, in the hot-kitchen competition.

Erfurt in Northern Germany is a medieval city known as much for its perfectly starched potato dumplings as for being Martin Luther's alma mater. And once every four years, it becomes a hub of international haute cuisine for a prestigious cooking event, the *Internationale Kochkunst Ausstellung* (IKA) International Culinary Exhibition, known as the "culinary Olympics."

Arriving from all over the world, chefs go through customs to declare such items from their homelands as frog's legs, oxtails and venison steaks, trout, industrial cookware, knives and other items that the rules of the competition allow. Once through customs, the chefs speed toward their test kitchens to create menus of food unlike anything the world has ever seen.

## ACF CULINARY NATIONAL TEAM USA

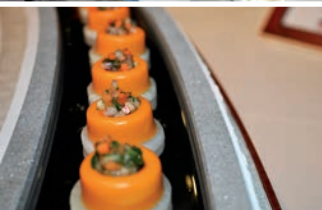
Crowds of spectators press against the glass kitchen to see what the Americans are cooking. Ben Grupe, team captain, sums up the team's outlook. "We're feeling really good, we're excited and anxious to get into the kitchen and crush it."

A film crew moves among the team members, and cameras on 12-foot poles peer into stockpots and over the head of Georges Castaneda, CEC, as he prepares the crab portion of the Alaskan halibut and king crab appetizer. The team works together with good humor, exchanging smiles and moving easily around each other.

Joseph Leonardi, CEC, team manager, and Tim Prefontaine, CEC, coach, both "culinary Olympics" veterans, push the team to stay on pace. The crowd cheers and claps as they transition to service. Corey Siegel, CEC, moves to the window to join Grupe and Castaneda, beginning a well-rehearsed dance of plating dishes. Joseph Albertelli, Jason Hall, CMC, and Matthew Seasock, CEC, stir the pots and sweep the line to prepare for the next flood of meal tickets.

PHOTO CREDITS: Dave Meril





A juicy mangalitsa pork loin with country sausage, braised shank and white bean fritter, foraged mushroom ragoût, red cabbage, parsnip, cipollini onion “tarte Tatin” and Madeira jus lié elicits enthusiastic approval from diners in the Restaurant of Nations. Susan Notter, CEPC, glazes a coconut/white chocolate mousse with roasted pineapple that reflects the flashes from spectators’ cameras.

After 11 hours of cooking and service, the national team feels optimistic about its prospects and the mood is energetic. “I think overall the team did a great job,” says Leonardi. “There were obstacles like working in a new kitchen, using Celsius, the metric system and malfunctioning equipment that they overcame, and I think the end result proved that.”

American Culinary Federation Education Foundation Chairman Michael Ty, CEC, AAC, was especially proud of the team. “I feel that the team did a phenomenal job,” says Ty. “I’ve been to several ‘culinary Olympics,’ and this one topped them all from the starter to the dessert. These chefs put their hearts and souls out there today.”

The kitchen is cleaned for the judges’ final inspection. The team will wake to the announcement of a gold medal, but they must earn a gold medal in the cold-food competition to be in the running for No. 1 overall.

## NO SLEEP TILL ERFURT

In the BMW test kitchen in Eisenach, 45 minutes outside Erfurt, Prefontaine places a layout of the cold-food display. Handmade ceramic plates created by Jono Pandolfi exclusively for ACF Culinary Team USA are to be placed atop glass cylinders etched with the team logo.

“We’re excited,” says Prefontaine. “Everything is coming down to the wire and everyone is working through problems.” A steampunk theme (steampunk is a subgenre of science fiction that incorporates modern concepts inspired by 19th century steam-powered machinery) weaves through the cold food display, a collaboration between team members that was years in the making. “What we’re trying to do is tell a story with the finger foods and hors d’oeuvres,” he adds.

Notter leans over the tiny purple feathers that are part of the top-hatted petits fours, and Andy Chlebana, CEPC, polishes the base of the chocolate showpiece. With giant links, clockwork gears and Mad Max-style goggles, the challenge of this piece is obvious—getting it to Erfurt intact.

The highway to Erfurt from Eisenach is a quick, straight shot, but one pothole could put the showpiece in jeopardy. “I





have a thick piece of foam to put on the floor of the van, and I'll sit with the piece to stabilize it to absorb small shocks on the way to Erfurt," Chlebana says

In Erfurt, foot traffic around the national team's display is heavy. Spectators take in a suspended light bulb that holds an orange soup. The buffet platter includes a spread of duck breast, duck rillettes and duck thigh along with a colorful assortment of marinated root vegetables accented with orange gelee. The roasted Carolina boar chop with sweet potato, plum, bread dumpling and Swiss chard complements the baked redfish with crawfish étouffée, rice pilaf and braised celery. The chocolate showpiece is a work of art.

At the awards ceremony, ACF Culinary National Team USA earns a gold medal in cold food. They celebrate with hugs and whoops, but their excitement is cautious. At the final awards ceremony, the team will learn their score, which will determine who wins the overall gold medal.

### ACF CULINARY YOUTH TEAM USA

A calm, busy hum pervades the BMW test kitchen in Eisenach as the youth team works on their mise en place. Jesus Olmedo, team

captain, remarks on the upcoming hot-food kitchen competition in which the team is to prepare a three-course menu of 60 dishes, "I'm feeling great and confident about tomorrow, and we're well-prepared for the competition. I have a lot of faith in all my teammates and think we're going to represent the U.S. well."

Youth Team Manager Stafford DeCambra, CEC, CCE, CCA, AAC, calls out, "One team," to which the team shouts back, "One dream." DeCambra says, "I tell the team to never lose focus of what we're trying to do and achieve."

The team departs for Erfurt at 4:30 a.m. to prepare what DeCambra describes as American regional cuisine. "We created a fall menu that is seasonal," he says. The menu reflects what one would find in an American landscape—crispy cauliflower-smoked trout terrine in the appetizer course and quinoa-crusting venison loin "poivrade" as the main course protein.

Spectators line all three sides of the corner kitchen as Megan Bamford pops the pumpkin Bavarian dessert from its mold. Critiqued by the judges as a portion that is too large but an excellent concept overall, the dessert plates from the Restaurant of Nations come back clean. Meanwhile, spectators stop waiters to inquire from which kitchen the dessert came. Overall, the judges yielded the youth team a silver medal in the hot-food kitchen.

### EDIBLE BUFFET—A NEW COMPETITION

ACF Culinary Youth Team USA entered the hot-food kitchen to prepare a menu that has never been attempted in the 116-year history of the "culinary Olympics." For the first time, youth teams did not create a cold-food presentation. Instead, they created an edible buffet that takes place in two parts: First, the teams prepare and cook a menu in the hot kitchen, then, they move up one floor to a satellite kitchen.

The youth team's menu is inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater design concept. Shawn Culp, CEC, MBA, youth team coach, says team members spend five hours getting it ready. "They will work in the main kitchen for three to four hours, then travel upstairs to the second floor to do some finishing work."

Upstairs, the team lays out the edible buffet. An orb of Wisconsin mozzarella mousse encased in tomato-red pepper glaze, balsamic caviar and an herb cracker are placed atop a silver display, little crispy squab sausages dot a platter, and a carrot/coriander mousse with kohlrabi/carrot salad atop a spiced cracker plays to the menu's Fallingwater theme.

The judges circle the display and consider the presentation, concept and taste of the menu, ultimately awarding a silver medal, an impressive achievement for the team in this new style of competition.

ABOVE, CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: 1) National team's steampunk-themed chocolate showpiece for the cold-food competition. 2) USACAT's cold-food buffet platter. 3) USACAT's crispy frog's legs finger food. 4) The USACAT team.

## CONGRATULATIONS

In addition to the teams competing under the ACF banner, the following U.S. teams and individuals competed at the IKA.

### *ACF Augusta Chapter*

**Marvin Herrera, CEC**, executive chef, Augusta Country Club, Augusta, Georgia

### *ACF Beehive Chefs Chapter*

**Peter Sproul, CEC**, chef instructor/associate professor, Utah Valley University, Orem, Utah

**Lyn Wells**, line chef, Canyon Park Café, Utah Valley University, Orem, Utah

### *ACF Greater Kansas City Chefs Association/Johnson County Community College*

**Edward Adel, CEC**, culinary instructor, Johnson County Community College, Shawnee Mission, Kansas

**Michael Lamping, CEC**, executive chef, Lake Quivira Country Club, Kansas City, Missouri

**Brian Leeper, CSC**

**Matthew Phillips, CSC**, apprentice, Blue Hills Country Club, Kansas City, Missouri

**Kathryn Ratzlaff, CPC**, pastry chef, Ibis Bakery, Lenexa, Kansas

**Todd Walline, CEC, CCA**, executive chef/director, food and beverage, Blue Hills Country Club

### *ACF Idaho Chefs de Cuisine*

**Courtney Wohlert**, Eagle, Idaho

### *ACF Michigan Chefs de Cuisine Association*

**Jeremy Abbey, CEC, CEPC, CCE, CCA**, certification director, American Culinary Federation, St. Augustine, Florida

**Thomas Giles, CEC**, executive chef, Lake Quivira Country Club, Kansas City, Missouri

**Scott O'Farrell, CEC, CEPC, CCA**, educator, Macomb Culinary Institute, Clinton Township, Michigan

**John Piazza, CEC**, director of culinary arts, Dorsey Culinary Academy, Roseville, Michigan

**Matthew Schellig, CEC, CCE, CCA**, associate director of culinary arts, Dorsey Culinary Academy, Roseville, Michigan

**Timothy Schmid**, Oak Park, Michigan

**Scott Simpson, CC**, sous chef, University of Michigan, St. Clair Shores, Michigan

### *ACF Professional Chefs Association of Houston*

**Edward Castillo, CEC**, managing chef, Rice University, Houston

### *ACF Red River Valley Chefs Association*

**Joseph Braid**, food service specialist, Arctic Co-operatives Limited, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

### *ACF Treasure Coast Chapter*

**Jacob Geib**, student, Indian River State College, Vero Beach, Florida

**Austin Miller**, student, Indian River State College, Vero Beach, Florida

**Kaitlyn Sullivan**, student, Indian River State College, Vero Beach, Florida

### *Bahamas Culinary Association*

**Tracey Sheldon Sweeting**, sous chef, Radisson Cable Beach Resort, Nassau, Bahamas

### *ICA-ACF Big Apple Chapter*

**Hwang June Jan**, executive chef, Stone Ridge, New York

**Robert Walljasper, CEC, CCE**, assistant professor, New York City College of Technology, Brooklyn, New York

### *Texas Chefs Association*

**Michele Brown**, executive pastry chef, Brook Hollow Golf Club, Dallas

**Sean Daniels**, Core Group, Dallas

**Patrick Mitchell, CEC, AAC**, executive chef, Ben E. Keith Foods, Fort Worth, Texas

**Salvatore Gisellu**, Coco Pazzo Restaurant, Dallas

## USACAT—SEASONED COLD-FOOD COMPETITORS

We may not think of barracks food as haute cuisine, but Chief Warrant Officer 3 Jesse Ward, CEC, and the U.S. Army Culinary Arts Team aim to change that mentality. Cold-food competition is especially well-suited for a military team accustomed to the discipline and mental focus the technique requires, and that focus earned USACAT four gold medals and a bronze in the cold-food competition, placing the team 18th overall.

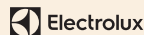
USACAT's gold-medal winning menu featured items that are "of the land" and simple food done exceptionally well. This included duck prepared three ways served with potato salad and a variety of nuts, berries and root vegetables. Crispy frog's legs with tomato/basil mousseline ratatouille and basil foam was also on the menu.

## USACAT—COMMUNITY CATERING COMPETITION

Styled in the fashion of a catered buffet, Master Chief Derrick Davenport, CEC, MBA, team captain, lays out strips of turkey that he pats with country sausage and wraps in casing. The smoked paprika meringue for the braised sweet potato won't set and the refrigerators can't cool the dessert quickly enough, but the team's determination prevails. The U.S. spectators cheer as USACAT begins service.

Hundreds of ticketholders of all nationalities line up to taste the seasonal menu that uses inexpensive ingredients served in an army kitchen. From the Southern-style greens and smoked-pork soup with corn cake croutons and mustard crème to the mushroom, leek and celery root "pot pie," USACAT serves portions of hot, hearty food that earn the team a bronze medal.

## SPONSORS



"They sold everything at the quality that they wanted to put it out at," says Ward, noting that team members outpaced their practice times. "The feedback on the food from both menus has been very positive."

The community catering competition earned USACAT a bronze medal and placed the team 12th overall.

## FINAL SCORES

More than 2,000 chefs from 59 nations came together to compete for the glory of the gold medal in the art of fine cookery. ACF Culinary National Team USA's focus earned the team three gold medals to rank fourth in the world. And the achievements of the national, military and youth teams show that American cuisine is among the finest in the world.

"Our cold-food table is different, because we used real food," says Leonardi of the team's cold-food gold-medal winning menu. "We created food that is bountiful in America and represents who we are as a country"