Culinary Arts

Herndon Career Center | Video Transcript

Students benefit from a broad curriculum during their first year in this class. We begin with safety and sanitation, which are paramount in the culinary program. From there, students build their culinary techniques and foundations, including knife cuts and cooking methods such as sautéing, braising, and poaching.

Students apply these methods to a variety of proteins, including chicken, beef, seafood, pork, and lamb. They also explore legume and vegetable cookery. Throughout the year, they learn to bring flavors together and apply the techniques they have practiced.

The second year focuses more on management, while continuing to develop advanced cooking skills and procedures. Students build their management abilities by working with labor and food costs, recipe development, and a capstone portfolio.

Students are often impressed by the facility when they first arrive. One of its highlights is Cinder, our freestanding, student-run restaurant. Students manage, operate, and work in every position in the restaurant on a rotating schedule.

Cinder is the capstone of our learning environment. Students prepare multi-course dinners for guests who pay to dine with us, giving them the opportunity to put their skills into practice in a real restaurant setting.

All students earn two certifications: a food handler's license and a ServSafe manager certification. These credentials go beyond the classroom and help prepare students to enter the industry with important food safety principles already in place.

Students practice classic French knife cuts, including tourné, paysanne, julienne, and brunoise, and apply those cuts through different cooking methods. They build on this foundation as they work with a variety of proteins, including chicken and game birds such as quail, pheasant, and duck.

Students learn how to fabricate and butcher proteins, remove bones, and use those bones to make stock, which is a foundation of cuisine. They then work with stocks, sauces, and soups, preparing a diverse range of international dishes, from cream soups and bisques to consommés.

Students also learn to break down larger cuts of meat and see where their food comes from. They turn larger portions into individual cuts such as steaks and sausage, practice marinating, and apply different cooking methods.

The seafood unit explores the variety of food provided by the ocean, including flatfish, round fish, shellfish, and crustaceans. Students continue applying appropriate cooking methods to each type.

The school year wraps up with dessert, baking, and pastry. Second-year students work on advanced projects such as tiered cakes, wedding cakes, showpieces, bread sculptures, and chocolate sculptures. First-year students focus on foundational baking methods, including the foaming, sponge, and génoise methods. They also develop skills in piping, frosting, and icing.

Students have the opportunity to work in a beautiful facility with 12 lab stations. Each station has a burner, an oven, and a refrigerator. The goal is to help students transition into the industry or a postsecondary culinary program by using the same type of equipment they will encounter in professional kitchens.

When students sit down with a chef or potential employer, they can confidently explain what they bring to the table because they have experience using industry-standard equipment found in kitchens throughout the country.

Each year, students participate in a ProStart competition sponsored by the National Restaurant Association. The program has been fortunate to see significant scholarship awards through this competition, with approximately $285,000 awarded to students. During my time in the culinary program, students have received more than $3 million in scholarships.

These scholarships can be life-changing. Some students are already planning to continue their education, while the opportunity encourages others to take that next step. One of my main goals is to help students continue their education and build successful futures without taking on college debt. That commitment is part of why we are so dedicated to the process of being first in the nation.