Press Release

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Fort Drum Public Affairs

10th Mountain Division chefs continue tradition of culinary excellence at Fort Drum

FORT DRUM, N.Y. (March 20, 2020) -- The Fort Drum Culinary Arts Team returned from the 45th Joint Culinary Training Exercise at Fort Lee, Virginia, with chefs having earned the title of Armed Forces Student Team of the Year, the Best in Show (Judges’ Choice) award and 16 American Culinary Federation medals.

Sgt. Joshua Hoyt, team captain, was the first member of his team in the kitchen during the weeklong competition, and he cooked up a silver medal performance in the Armed Forces Chef of the Year category.

“Winning a silver medal in the Armed Forces Chef of the Year event was extremely exciting for me,” he said. “It just shows how much hard work and training went into preparing for that. Every time I do this event I learn something and grow professionally.”

Hoyt also was presented with the Best in Show award from the judging panel, which recognizes the chef who demonstrates culinary excellence, as well as workmanship, attitude, passion and leadership. He said it felt great to be recognized for the dedication he has committed to the culinary arts.

“It’s a real honor to know that it shows how much passion I have for the culinary arts and for teaching young Soldiers and chefs,” he said.

The team of student chefs earned a bronze medal in the Student Skills category, and was named Student Chef Team of the Year. Team members practiced their knife and cooking skills for weeks leading up to the competition, and worked together in the kitchen to develop a perfect menu. Just days before they left for the competition, an unexpected roster change occurred and the team was able to quickly adapt to the situation.

“It was really great to see how they gelled together as a team all the way to the end, and to watch them pick each other up,” Hoyt said. “Whenever somebody stumbled, somebody else would be right there to pick them up.”

Pfc. Chancelor Douglas was ecstatic about his experience on the student chef team. Like several of his teammates, it was his first time at a culinary arts competition.

“It was pretty amazing, actually,” Douglas said. “A little nerve-wracking for my first time, but it was nice that we came together the way we did and walked away with some medals.”

He said that the student chefs worked hard to earn the title of Student Team of the Year, though it was not an easy event.

“That was what we strived for, and it was great, but anything could have happened,” Douglas said.

The annual event brought 19 teams of talented military chefs together, included teams from the United Kingdom, Germany and France. It is the largest ACF-sanctioned competition in North America, but it also serves as a learning laboratory where chefs can benefit from the talents of their peers and the expertise of world-class judges.

“I came away learning that teamwork is key, and that in this competition you should expect the unexpected,” Douglas said.

The student chefs also earned an opportunity to attend American Culinary Federation National Convention in Dallas, Texas, this summer. The event showcases the latest culinary trends with educational seminars and demonstrations.

“I am really excited for them to be able to go to Nationals,” Hoyt said. “They will learn so much there, and they deserve this opportunity.”

The Fort Drum culinarians also brought home bronze medals in the Nutritional Hot Food Challenge, Pastry Chef of the Year and Hot Food Kitchen categories. Hoyt earned an individual silver medal for his five-course gastromonique category on the team’s cold food table display. Sgt. Keisha Morgan earned an individual bronze medal for the hors d’oeuvres category on the table display.

Hoyt said that, even as the COVID-19 pandemic captured headlines throughout the competition, the chefs had to put it out of their minds to concentrate on their performances in the kitchen.

One of the criteria that chefs were graded on is sanitation and their ability to keep a clean work station. In that regard, Hoyt said that they were operating in a relatively germ-free environment.

“As far as the COVID-19 went, while we were there it was not unnoticeable,” he said. “But being that we are all professionals there and in the food service industry, we were already practicing the things that needed to happen anyways.”

Hoyt said that his team was glad they were able to finish all of their events and that everyone returned to Fort Drum proud of their accomplishments.

“I’m just extremely proud of the entire team and how they did,” he said. “You could really see how our team came together from what they did throughout the week. All that training that we had done was definitely worth the time and effort we put in, and it made the event that much more fun.”

The following Soldiers represented Fort Drum and the 10th Mountain Division (LI):

Professional chefs:

Sgt. Joshua Hoyt, 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team Sgt. Keisha Morgan, 593rd Quartermaster Company, 10th Mountain Division Sustainment Brigade Sgt. Kishroy Robinson, 593rd Quartermaster Company, 10th Mountain Division Sustainment Brigade Sgt. Comlan Sedjro, 593rd Quartermaster Company, 10th Mountain Division Sustainment Brigade Spc. Enoch Sales, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 10th Brigade Support Battalion

Student Chefs:

Pfc. Jonathan Arendale, 3rd Squadron, 71st Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team Pfc. Chancelor Douglas, 593rd Quartermaster Company, 10th Mountain Division Sustainment Brigade Pfc. Joanna Delacruz, 1st Squadron, 89th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team Pfc. Kenny Driscoll, 41st Brigade Engineer Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team Pfc. Victoria Espinoza, 593rd Quartermaster Company, 10th Mountain Division Sustainment Brigade

Team Captain: Sgt. Joshua Hoyt

Team Manager: Sgt. 1st Class Jeremiah Sawatzke

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For photos and cutlines to accompany this story go to:

https://www.dvidshub.net/news/365609/10th-mountain-division-chefs-continue-tradition-culinary-excellence-fort-drum

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