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Tracy Manforte
UNH Media Relations

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UNH Dining Earns Rave Reviews in National Competition

By *Tracy Manforte*
UNH News Bureau

DURHAM, N.H. -- University of New Hampshire Hospitality Services acquired a smorgasbord of awards in recent national competition, including a first place win for its theme dinner featuring celebrity chef Martin Yan.

The 26th Annual Loyal E. Horton Dining Awards Contest recognizes outstanding food service at colleges and universities. Among the competition UNH faced in various categories were Harvard, Tufts and the University of Connecticut.

The Yan dinner was actually part of a day-long event which featured the public television host and master chef signing cookbooks, making guest appearances and visiting UNH cooks as they prepared his recipes. The event also marked the grand opening of Asian Creations, a specialty food kiosk in the UNH retail shop.

The Yan win puts UNH in the running for the grand prize honor, which will be announced at a July 9 ceremony in Baltimore.

UNH food service has been an award-winning operation for more than a decade, and in recent years has won honors in multiple categories.

This year, UNH also placed in the Cash Sales category, earning a second place finish for food service in the Memorial Union Building, home to the Coffee Office and MUB Food Court. UNH also took home third-place for its dining hall menus, which this year featured a Culinary Global Tour in March that exposed students to multi-cultural cuisine of Africa, Japan, Morocco and India, to name a few.

Rochelle L'Italien, UNH registered dietitian who marketed the winning portfolios along with intern Jared Demetri, says staying ahead in campus cuisine means keeping up with trends, from pasta bars to panini grills. "Changes in student clientele each year bring a new class with new expectations," she says. So what can they expect next year? New this fall in one of the dining halls, says L'Italien, is a made-to-order omelet station, complete with veggies and cheese.

"We get out there and talk to students, and what we've found is they want to see the food being made in front of them, fresh and tailored to their tastes," she continues. "They also want flexibility and choices."

In response, over the years UNH has added fresh baked breads, a deli counter and "creative cuisine" display cooking events to its smorgasbord of offerings.

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