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**PRESS RELEASE**

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## **Navy Chefs Cook Up Victory in Las Vegas Culinary Challenge**

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**NAS NORTH ISLAND, Calif.** -- A team of Navy Chefs earned high-award recognition at the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Las Vegas Culinary Challenge in Las Vegas, March 6 and 7.

The team of Culinary Specialist (CS) 1<sup>st</sup> Class(SW) Brandon Parry, enlisted aide to Commander, Naval Air Forces; CS1(SW) Cameron Savage, enlisted aide to Commander, Naval Surface Forces; CS1(SW) Tom McNulty, enlisted aide to Commander, Navy Region Southwest; and CS2(SW/AW) Mike Edwards, flag mess chef for the Secretary of the Navy, earned four medals -- the highest medal count of any team in the competition -- and first and second place “Best of Show” awards.

The Las Vegas Challenge placed more than 50 executive-level chefs in a head-to-head competition in front of 30,000 spectators. Each chef prepared four plates of food for each category entered: one plates for display and three for the judges to sample. The main categories were fish, poultry and lamb. Six of the only 61 American Culinary Federation’s (ACF) Certified Master Chefs judged the competition.

Parry earned a silver medal and first place “Best of Show” in the fish preparation category. His teammates, Savage, McNulty and Edwards, each won bronze medals in the

chicken preparation category. Additionally, Edwards placed second for “Best of Show” in his category.

“The competition was tough,” said Parry. “All participants were culinary pros, such as culinary instructors, country club chefs, and other executive chefs. The judging was also all done by Master Chefs, who have worked in the culinary arts their whole lives.”

Parry, a Personal Certified Executive Chef (PCEC), formed the team and entered the challenge as practice for hopeful participation in the 2008 Culinary Olympics in Germany.

He came up with the idea of a team when he helped his teammates earn their Personal Certified Chef (PCC) certification. The certification process provides advanced culinary skills to chefs.

“The CSs on the team asked me how to get certified, and while they were earning their certifications I thought, ‘the Navy has never had a culinary team, and here are some great CSs. Wouldn’t it be great to be able to compete,’” said Parry.

Parry said the judging at the competition was at about what they can expect at the Olympic level, and the outcome would tell them if they have a chance.

To train for the event, the team practiced on holidays, weekends and evenings, according to Parry. He also looked to a mentor of his for help.

“I called up a chef buddy of mine, Mial Parker,” said Parry. “He’s a Certified Executive Chef, culinary educator, and a three-time Culinary Olympic gold medalist. He agreed to help and flew here, from San Jose [Calif.], during his vacation time, just to train us.”

The team also flew to San Jose occasionally to train in his kitchen. Most of these expenses the chefs paid for personally.

In order to find more opportunities to practice, Parry worked midnight shifts with the butchers at a major West Coast seafood supplier. He used the time to practice filleting fish quickly, a requirement for the fish preparation category.

Parker wanted to train the CSs because he enjoys developing culinary skills and watching people succeed.

“Brandon [Parry] gave me a call and I said, ‘Hey, the Navy doesn’t have a team yet, so let’s give them something to get up and cheer about,’” Parker said. “It’s been really fun working with [the CSs]. They learn and adapt very quickly. For [the team to] never be in a competition before and, to do so well in a major one like this -- it’s unheard of.”

Candy Wallace, executive director and founder of the American Personal and Private Chef Association (APPCA), said new competitors don't usually win medals.

"First time competitors usually receive certificates of recognition for having shown up and competed. This team showed up and won..." she said.

The medals are a result of Parry's dedication to the personal and professional development of himself and others.

The ACF defines a PCEC as a chef with a minimum of seven years of professional cooking experience and a minimum of two years as a personal chef. He or she is responsible for menu planning and development, marketing, financial management, and operational decisions. A PCEC also provides nutritious, eye-appealing and properly flavored foods.

A PCC, one level lower than a PCEC, is chef with a minimum of four years of professional cooking experience, and a minimum of one full year of employment as a personal chef.

"Another requirement for the certification is to have some specialized schooling, so I contacted the APPCA to help get scholarships for them to the American Personal and Private Chef Institute in San Diego," said Parry.

The knowledge and skills gained from the certification process, combined with the training provided by Parker, were main factors in the team's success in the challenge, according to Parry. Another big one is teamwork.

"We entered the competition to individually compete, but came out as a team," said Parry. "During the competition we would take each other's dirty dishes out and stand by each other for moral support if needed. None of us would have done well if it wasn't for the assistance we provided each other."

Parker said he stressed to the other CSs they needed to know each other's positions and menus in order to be successful. They would never know when one of them might have to fill in for another.

The team may still need more preparation to be ready for their goal of competing in the Culinary Olympics, but the medals they earned at this competition proved that they are a serious culinary force.

“At the outcome of the competition everyone took us [Navy Culinary Specialists] seriously,” said Parry. “This really puts us in a league with the executive chefs in the industry, and it really validates our skill level in the community.”

Chef Dale Shigenaga, chairman of the Las Vegas Culinary Challenge, said the CSs showed what that it takes to be successful in the culinary arts.

“They arrived prepared,” said Shigenaga. “They even came in a day early to take a look at the kitchen. To be a winner [in this competition] you have to have love, desire, and passion for the culinary arts, and they had it.”

The CSs made such an impression that they have made fans out of the judges.

“One of the Master Chef judges asked the team where they would be competing next so he could follow their career. It was a proud moment for the team and for all of us [at the APPCA] as well. Personal and Private Chefs are no longer immediately perceived as second class culinarians,” said Wallace.

Any CS can attain a high level of expertise said Parry. It just takes dedication and drive.

“Don’t ever give up. Anything in life is possible if you want it badly enough,” said Parry. “I couldn’t tell you how many people looked at me like I was crazy when I told them that I wanted to do this, and look how it turned out.”

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