

Castle Rock culinary courses heats up students interest in cooking

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Alicia Wilson has always liked to cook. She recalls helping out in the kitchen ever since she was little.

Now the 10th grader has the opportunity to develop her skills in Castle Rock Charter School's Culinary I and II classes as part of its Family Career and Community Leaders of America program.

"It's what used to be called 'Home Ec,'" said life management teacher Taudine Andrew.

Andrew said the FCCLA program teaches students life skills they can take with them after graduation that assists them with living on their own and for earning a living.

The sequence of courses begin with lessons in life management 101 that includes personal finance, cooking, nutrition, child development and fashion interiors.

Then students sign up for Culinary I, an introduction to food service. And new this year is Culinary II, an intermediary class that students will actually earn a food handlers permit from the state.

For Wilson, currently enrolled in Culinary II, it's knowledge that's a base for the perfect backup plan.

"I'm interested in the medical field, but that could change. If I was to get into a culinary institute, I'd take it," Wilson said. "This course has been a great opportunity. I've learned so much that I didn't know before, like using a knife properly. Without learning about the food handler's certificate, I would have never known about stuff like temperature safety zones, the importance of washing your hands and other good safety habits."

Andrew said that although the Culinary courses are an elective, they meet the Del Norte High School graduation requirement for technical career education.

After the students learn the safety basics around the kitchen, she leads students through the basics of cooking techniques, including sautes, baking and roasting. Then moves them through the "mother sauces," the first level of French cooking, always keeping the lessons nutrition based.

Co-instructor Kathy Buckley said the curriculum is developed from career and technical guidelines developed by the state and found online.

She added students will be led to a big goal at the end of the course.

"Students will have to cater a school event," she said.

For example, last year the students catered an end-of-year Harry Potter party.

An ongoing portion of the program is featuring guest speakers and chefs. Andrew said the school is looking for businesses to partner with for the Culinary I and II programs, to include tours, internships and job shadowing opportunities. If any business owners are interested in learning more about partnering, contact Andrew at taudineandrew@delnorte.k12.ca.us or call the school at 464-0390.