

Certification: Same Goal, Different Paths

By Chief Warrant Officer 4 Russell Campbell, CEC®

The U.S. Army has a strong commitment to increasing awareness of the American Culinary Federation and stressing the importance of certification for its service members. Compared with their civilian counterparts, military chefs have unique challenges in achieving their certifications, such as handling deployments and trainings.

At the recent 35th U.S. Army Culinary Arts Competition held at Fort Lee, Va., culinarians from all branches of the military gathered to foster personal growth, further learning and gain knowledge about ACF certifications. I caught up with two certification candidates who, along with 220 other passionate culinarians, had come to test their knowledge and skill through individual and team competitions. These two culinarians come from diverse backgrounds in the foodservice industry and have different career aspirations; however, they share a passion to become ACF-certified in their culinary specialty.

Sgt. David Allen, a two-time competitor for the Korean Culinary Arts Team, is striving for his certified culinarian (CC®) certification while stationed in Korea. In spite of his limited exposure to culinary training opportunities because of Army training missions, his commitment to his craft is paramount. His passion is expressed through the mantra, "Lead, follow or get out of the way," which is why he encourages military culinarians to study foodservice-related manuals and to devour the foodservice correspondence courses for a clearer and deeper understanding of military foodservice operations.

Allen understands that certification is an important tool in verifying a chef's knowledge and skill and also a way to get a foot in the door. He feels that ACF certification communicates to an employer or superior your commitment and dedication to the culinary arts.

His passion for both the military and culinary arts was passed down from his father, Harold Allen. "My father has been my inspiration since I can remember. He is a great, well-rounded chef who excels in all phases of the culinary arts, and he is a former Army foodservice professional," Allen says. "I was privileged to assist him in the kitchen when I was younger." Allen recently passed his certified culinarian written exam, and plans to take his practical test later this year.

Spc. Rose Picard, a pastry chef at Fort Hood, Texas, is active with the culinary-development program at Fort Hood, where she cooks and helps to train other military and civilian cooks. She encourages civilian culinary professionals to mentor and help develop future chefs. Picard has been working as a pastry chef for more than 15 years. One of her goals as an Army cook is to set an example for other 92Gs (food service specialists), and to strive for excellence.



Spc. Rose Picard competes at the 35th U.S. Army Culinary Arts Competition, Fort Lee, Va.

"I think it is important to bring professionalism to the Army, and to tell our fellow Army cooks that they can be more than just a cook," she says. "We have the most important job in the Army, and that is feeding the soldier." Picard recently tried out for the U.S. Army Culinary Arts Team (USACAT), and is on the path to becoming an ACF-certified executive pastry chef (CEPC®).

Military culinarians have the same aspirations as civilian culinarians; they strive to be certified and be the best in their craft. With the military commitment to ACF certification, these aspirations are becoming a reality for many military chefs.

ACF Certification Commission

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