

Making the Team

A group of junior members from St. Louis is the new ACF Culinary Youth Team USA.

By Kay Orde

Steve Jilleba, CMC, CCE, AAC, wants two things from the members of ACF Culinary Youth Team USA: dedication, and a willingness to practice as never before.

Jilleba, who is the team's manager, knows that the stakes are high. The team will go to Erfurt, Germany, in October 2008 as part of ACF Culinary Team USA. They will compete in the International Culinary Exhibition (IKA) against as many as 20 international youth teams, whose members are every bit as determined to win.

Five junior members of Chefs de Cuisine Association of St. Louis Inc. were named to the ACF Culinary Youth Team USA July 23 at the national convention in Orlando. Cooking as a team, they competed against four other junior teams in the ACF Culinary Youth Team USA tryouts July 22 on the trade-show floor.

Michael Bush, cook, Old Warson Country Club, St. Louis; John Gelineau, line cook, Bellerive Country Club, St. Louis; Mike Palazzo, cook, Old Warson Country Club;

Wayne Sieve, cook, Racquet Club Ladue, St. Louis; and Kevin Taylor, cook, St. Louis Country Club, St. Louis, were named to the team. They were coached by Paul Kampff, CEC, executive chef, St. Louis Country Club; and J. Kevin Storm, executive chef, Bellerive Country Club. Craig Meyer, CEC, executive chef, Algonquin Golf Club, Glendale, Mo., was team coordinator.

Jilleba, corporate executive chef for Unilever Foodsolutions, Lisle, Ill., is

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Left to right, Steven Jilleba, CMC, CCE, AAC, ACF Culinary Youth Team USA manager; team members Kevin Taylor, Michael Bush, John Gelineau, Mike Palazzo and Wayne Sieve; and Edward Leonard, CMC, AAC, ACF Culinary Team USA manager.

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manager of ACF Culinary Youth Team USA. Edward Leonard, CMC, AAC, executive chef at Westchester Country Club, Rye, N.Y., is manager of ACF Culinary Team USA, which comprises ACF Culinary National Team USA, ACF Culinary Regional Team USA and ACF Culinary Youth Team USA.

Jilleba hopes that something else comes into play for the team when it heads to the IKA. "I hope they have a good day," he says. "Because being successful in competition is a lot of that—you hope that everything comes together on the day."

In their favor

This group of young chefs had one of those days at the team tryouts in Orlando July 22. They won the right to be named to the U.S. team against four other teams that had the same hopes and dreams. To go up against the best youth teams in the world will take an extra dose of whatever propelled them to victory in Orlando. Jilleba says they have a lot going for them.

"The team has a good inner structure. They work well, especially under pressure, and during the tryouts, they proved that they could make the adjustments necessary to come through and produce good food," he says.

The ability to produce good food is a given for a team that hopes to compete internationally, but ACF Culinary Youth Team USA has something else that bodes well for them in Erfurt.

"They have good support, which is important, as I'm in Chicago and Chef Leonard is in New York," Jilleba says. Such support from local chefs will enable the team to practice in between the formal practice sessions that Jilleba will hold every other month at first and monthly as the IKA draws nearer. "They need that support, so that they can continue to work even when I'm not there," he says.

A world view

Judges at the tryouts had some key attributes in mind for the potential youth team. "We were looking for a group that would work together as a team, which this team does," Jilleba says. "And we needed to make sure that they would be willing to represent the United States in American cuisine, and share what they know with other countries."

Sharing with other countries might be an odd idea to those not familiar with international culinary competition, but such camaraderie is vital to the health of the foodservice industry worldwide. Chefs learn and grow from the involvement with their counterparts from other countries.

Now, Jilleba says, the task will be one of working to build the young team's confidence in its menu and presentation. Both will be vital to a win in Erfurt. "If they are to be successful at the IKA, they need to be willing to work hard to perfect both those pieces," he says.



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John Gelineau, a member of the Chefs de Cuisine Association of St. Louis Inc. team, plates dessert during tryouts for ACF Culinary Youth Team USA July 22 in Orlando.

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