

WHAT IS THE "CULINARY OLYMPICS?"

BY MICHELLE WHITFIELD

In October, ACF Culinary Team USA will go for the gold at the *Internationale Kochkunst Ausstellung* (IKA), commonly known as the "culinary Olympics," in Erfurt, Germany. What, exactly, is the IKA?

It began in 1896. A group of German chefs, seeking recognition of the chef profession as a trade, wanted to promote German cuisine as well as receive influences from other cultures. The first international culinary exhibition was held in 1900, and the IKA continues to be held every four years in Germany.

The United States entered the arena in 1956 as the underdog, but quickly became a competitor to reckon with. In 1960, the U.S. team established American chefs and American cuisine by becoming overall champions. Teams in 1980, 1984 and 1988 repeated the honor by winning the hot-food competition. Then, the 2004 and 2008 teams reestablished the U.S. in the international arena by winning third place overall.

The 2012 team members have already proven themselves to the culinary world by taking third place at the 2010 Culinary World Cup in Luxembourg, often considered a preview of the IKA.

"ACF Culinary Team USA not only showcases the vast amount of talent our federation and country possess, but it also puts the U.S. high on the international scene and paves the way for chefs like me to compete at the IKA in the future," says L. Fernando Mojica, CSC, line cook at Barrington Hills

Country Club, Chicago, and a Team USA supporter.

Let's take a closer look at the team's competition at the upcoming IKA.

The Singapore National Team took first place at the 2010 Culinary World Cup following an intense five-month training session. Most recently, the team took first place at the 2010 Battle for The Lion Food & Hotel Asia, Singapore, and the 2011 WA Oceanafest, Perth, Australia.

The Sweden National Team placed second at the Culinary World Cup, and contributes its success to a strong team spirit and the fact that individual team members regularly compete at the international level. The team trains at the Kitchen of the Future at Electrolux headquarters in Stockholm.

A win for ACF Culinary Team USA 2012 would enhance the reputation for culinary excellence of American chefs and American cuisine. It will inspire chefs to do their best work and raise the standard of culinary skills.

"We celebrate these foodservice professionals' culinary creativity, passion for flavorful food and determination to showcase the highest caliber of cooking," says Phil Kafarakis, vice president, McCormick For Chefs, a Team USA sponsor.

Let's wish the team all the best at the IKA in Erfurt, Germany, Oct. 5-10. ■



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ABOVE: ACF Culinary Team USA member Tim Bucci, CEC, CCE, CHE, right, works on tapas during cold-food practice at Johnson & Wales University. Kevin Storm, CEC, CCA, AAC, is at left.