Louisiana Culinary Institute provides ‘serious’ atmosphere

Editor's note: Almost every week the Food staff is asked to recommend where a reader's son or daughter should attend culinary school. The types of culinary training programs available are vast and range from trade schools to university degree programs. Over the next few months, the Food staff will profile the various types of culinary schools and the programs offered. Today's report is the second in the series.

BY TOMMY C. SIMMONS
Advocate food editor

The Louisiana Culinary Institute founded in 2003 at 5837 Essen Lane in Baton Rouge is a professional cooking and culinary arts school. The curriculum starts with classroom instruction in food safety, sanitation and an introduction to restaurant cooking, the commercial kitchen, customer service and a primer on stocks, sauces and soups.

Educational units are tightly scheduled into a five-hour day, which starts at 9 a.m. and ends at 2:30 p.m. with 30 minutes allotted to a working lunch prepared by the sophomore-level students. “We have a set curriculum designed to train students to become knowledgeable professionals in food service operations,” said Jordan Lewis, marketing director for the Louisiana Culinary Institute. “While I would not describe the classroom atmosphere as intense, I would say it’s serious. We have a great deal of information to cover every quarter and expect students to come in each morning ready to learn. The food business is tough, competitive, demanding, and we think it’s important for the

Tuition and fees

Here are the costs for enrolling in the Louisiana Culinary Institute’s 2007-2008 Diploma in Professional Cooking and Culinary Arts, a four-quarter or 12-month program.

TUITION: $15,000
FEES PACKAGE: $3,000 which includes supplies, lab fees and daily meal.
REGISTRATION: $100
ASSOCIATE DEGREE TUITION: $7,250 for an additional six months of training.

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Chef Michael Johnson at the Louisiana Culinary Institute works with Amber Grogan of Patterson on her knife skills.
Ed the school after his younger

Keith Rush. Rush said he started

nessman and philanthropist

respect for the chef instructor

and sanitation rules of the

professional culinary school.

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professional chefs uniform: a

grammed white chefs jacket

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in the Louisiana Culinary Institute's first students ing and inventory control. After planning and preparation opening in 2003, "said.

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those 60 students. We have 100 percent job

"The Louisiana Culinary Institute is located in a remodeled

restaurant at 5037 Essen Lane in Baton Rouge.

Local graduate:

Chef Sam Brunson Jr.

The Louisiana Culinary Institute

what they really learn in meal

planning and preparation is the

importance of careful purchas-

ing and inventory control. After

their quarter in the kitchen, the

students are able to run a real

restaurant's kitchen," Johnson

said.

In addition to the classroom and kitchen instruction on the

Louisiana Culinary Institute premises, students are able to participate in weekend line-

cooking assignments at K-Plan and Commander's Palace restaurants in New Orleans. Se-

eral internships are available at the Rice-Carthen in St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands, and at a

restaurant chain in Hawaii.

Lewis said the current student body is about evenly made

up of students from out of state, in state and Baton Rouge. Many culinary students from out of

state want to come to Louisiana to study because of the reputation

of the Louisiana Culinary Institute, Lewis

noted.

"We are growing our school and see in the process of comple-

ting purchase of property on

Airline Highway that will en-

able us to increase our enrol-

ment to 90 students, which is

our goal," Lewis said. "Because

of facility constraints, we do

have to limit our enrollment at

present to 60 students. And that

means we have to make diffi-

cult choices some time since

we receive about 2,100 applica-

tions for each year for those

60 places."

"However," Lewis continued,

"our size has enabled us to offer

lots of assistance to our stu-

dents. We have 100 percent job

placement, and our goal is to

prepare students for the world

that within one year of graduat-

ing they will be in a manage-

ment role in a restaurant or

hospitality facility." The board of Louisiana Culinary Institute is hands-on,

and our graduates." The Louisiana Culinary Institute faculty includes chefs John

Brunson, Paul's and Commander's Palace and Lewis Dunn, David Tiner and

Michael Johnson.

"It's definitely prepared him for

the type of professionali-

ty I was going to give me a lot of con-

fidence to go out and do this on

a professional level," he said. "He

believes the school provides its

students as good an education

as any of the top culinary schools in the country, and it

"definitely" prepared him for

the work he is now doing.

CAREER: Brunson did not have

business administrative work for 25

years, including 17 years in

Mexico. He said he always liked

baking and was doing catering on

a part-time basis in Mexico

when he decided he wanted to

be in the kitchen fulltime. He

completed the Louisiana Culinary

School one-year program in

November 2006. He joined the

pastry staff at the Hilton Baton

Rouge Capitol Center hotel in

September and was named pastry chef in March. He plans to return to the school to

earn his associate's degree in

culinary arts.

and his duties.

"We are very proud of both our school

and our graduates," Lewis said. "The students tell us what the students need to

succeed. We are very market oriented."

When the Louisiana Culinary Institute was started, Lewis said, the board and founder de-

cided that the students needed to be exposed to both the classroom and apprenticeship style of

learning. Their program is 50-50, with 60 percent of their time being spent in the classroom

learning academically about food, food science, safety, sanitation, hygiene, tradition, culinary

math, culinary English and more. The other 30 percent is spent learning technical and

procedure.

"Our instructors have set a

standard in training that is

equal to some of the best in

the world," Lewis said, "and we are

very proud of both our school

and our graduates."

The Louisiana Culinary Institute

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