

Colleges' app offers dining tips

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Looking for a new twist on roasted butternut squash? Or a wine that pairs best with pumpkin pie?

There's an app for that. And it's locally grown.

Suffolk County Community College's Culinary Arts program, in a unique collaboration with Auburn University in Alabama, has launched a mobile app for Apple and Android devices called Holiday Celebrations. It offers recipes, cooking video demonstrations, food safety tips, holiday facts and dinner etiquette.

College officials said the project — part educational and part promotional — is a novel way to get the word out about the bustling Riverhead culinary program as there's growing demand for food education on Long Island and nationally.

"There's more here than just going to school," said Troy Hahn, the college's associate dean for instructional technology. "There's a lot of fun that goes on here."

Hahn came to SCCC in January to help develop the school's online education program. He began creating the app last year while he still was employed at Auburn, the first land-grant college in the South.

The app draws on experts from both schools, he said, as well as source material from more than a dozen other groups, including the Turkey Federation, Publix Supermarkets, the History Channel and the Mississippi Sweet Potato Growers Association.

The advent of "farm-to-table" and "slow food" movements have helped bring more awareness to the benefits of home cooking, while televised culinary competitions and baking reality shows have glamorized the industry.

"The chef went out of the kitchen and onto the television and has become a star, so I think that's helped every culinary program," said Richard Freilich, the college's culinary arts program director.

SCCC's culinary arts pro-



Students Patricia Reed and Jacqueline Corsini, right, learn dinner etiquette as part of the college's culinary arts program in Riverhead.

gram, located on Main Street in Riverhead, has grown 10 percent since last year to more than 400 students in culinary arts, baking and hotel management.

The associate degree programs have a cross-section of local students, officials said: those who are returning to the community college for a career change, or to hone their culinary skills; those who have been priced out of private culinary schools such as Johnson & Wales University in Rhode Island and The Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park; and the traditional students out of high school.

"Culinary school really wasn't in my field of view for a long time," said Satoko Matthews, 29. "Growing up in Port Washington, I was sort of expected to go to business school or become a lawyer."

Matthews, who now lives in Patchogue, left Bridgewater College in Virginia, where she was majoring in business and equine management. She worked office jobs in New York City for a few years before she decided to sign up for culinary classes at SCCC.

"I was so nervous, because I had never been in an industrial kitchen before," she said. "But after the first month, I was like, 'Yeah, this is what I want to do.'"

Matthews holds cooking demonstrations at Sur la Table, a kitchen supply store in the

Smithaven Mall, and is a garde chef in charge of preparing the cold dishes at the Westhampton Country Club. She will graduate next month with her associate degree in restaurant management and hopes to open her own catering business.

Among the best reasons to enroll in the SCCC program, she said, is that she was able to pay for it out-of-pocket.

The culinary program has five full-time and 30 part-time faculty members. Graduates have gone on to work in various positions in East End restaurants, and hotels such as Topping Rose House in Bridgehampton, Nick & Toni's in East Hampton and the Suffolk-based Lessing's catering company, Freilich said.

The cost to launch an app like the SCCC-Auburn type generally would run about \$100,000, but in this case, "there were some beautifully aligned stars," Hahn said.

A friend who founded BW Digital Publishing, a mobile-app-building company based in California, had owed Hahn a favor and helped build the app for free. All of the chefs and instructors in the videos were volunteers. The college spent only the cost of ingredients in the recipes.

The app is a good way to bridge the gap between the hands-on culinary classes and the move toward online coursework, Hahn said.



Volunteer Cathy Maerz, right, helps Kenney pack "a little piece of home and love" to send to troops.



Kenney receives the VFW Gold Medal of Merit yesterday for her work. ■ Video: newsday.com/ronkonkoma

than just helping the troops. It's about helping a woman who made such an ultimate sacrifice," she said. "I'm just in awe of her."

Word of the foundation's closing also drew people touched by its work, including Staff Sgt. Dadmarie Alvarado, 38, of Bayamon, Puerto Rico, who is stationed at Fort Knox in Kentucky. In 2004 and 2009, she received Kenney's packages during deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan.

"You guys do not know what that meant," said Alvarado, who came to Long Island and spoke passionately to the volunteers yesterday. "It was like Christmas."

Also there was John Nystrom, of South Burlington, Vermont, an Army medic who survived the attack that killed Fletcher but struggled at the scene to keep him alive. Having

never met Kenney before, he emailed her when he learned the foundation was shutting down and asked if he could come.

Kenney, who stopped accepting a salary from her organization in August, said she hopes to return to either physical therapy or holistic medicine, fields she left to run Jacob's Light.

But for one last night, she was back in her element, exhorting a roomful of bustling volunteers to pack a final round of gift boxes to be sent overseas.

"One deck of cards per box, cookies in each until they run out," she said, moments after being presented the Gold Medal of Merit from the national Veterans of Foreign Wars.

"One salami in a box. And I need someone to guard the salamis."