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**Hawaii Soldiers get set for DoD-wide culinary arts competition**

“They have a passion for it.... If they have passion, we can teach them what they need to know to get there.”

That’s how Chef Alan Tsuchiyama, culinary arts instructor at Kapiolani Community College, described the 14 Soldiers trying to make the team that will represent Hawaii at the 33rd Annual US Army Culinary Arts Competition at Fort Lee, Va. March 1-15.

“It’s pretty intense,” said Staff Sgt. Anica Spencer of USARPAC’s Special Troops Battalion. “I think everybody is putting on their game faces on today. It’s going to be a tough call.”

Spencer, a veteran of the 2005 DoD-wide competition, is one of three food services specialists competing for the pastry chef position on the team. Last Friday was the final day of qualifications, when she and her fellow competitors had only three hours to prepare three dishes for viewing and tasting by Chef Alan, SSG David Marcelli, the culinary team’s manager SFC C.W. Francis III, and team captain SGT. Edmund Perez.

First time competitor Spc. Lucas Ashley of F Co., 325<sup>th</sup> Brigade Support Battalion took the competition in stride. “I wasn’t too nervous, because I knew what I was cooking,” Ashley said. His menu for the day: “Tomato and basil soup with prosciutto ham, salad with roasted jalapeno with vinaigrette cranberries. My entrée was stuffed pesto chicken with spinach, garlic and parmesan cheese sauce,” Ashley said.

For the past three weeks, the contestants worked with Chef Alan, who learned his trade at Kapiolani Community College and as a chef at world-class restaurants in Hawaii, Chicago and Austria.

“For the first two weeks, we concentrated on cold platters,” Chef Alan said. “They have to be perfect and have to be glazed with aspic.”

“It’s stuff I’ve always seen but never knew how to do,” said Spc. Ashley. “We take a normal dish and transform it into something totally different”

Unlike the Iron Chef television program, however, the Army competition relies on teamwork as well as individual talent. Spc. Jason Nauta, who won a gold medal in the hot food international category as a junior chef apprentice in the Fort Lee competition in 2006, commented, “Everybody comes up with their own recipes. Then you practice it, you critique each other, from the lowest ranking to the highest ranking guy. It’s very exciting, I always love it.”

Team captain Sgt. Edmund Perez was impressed with the team being formed this year. "I'm impressed, because they're a very young team, with new and exciting ideas for this year's competition," said Perez.

Perez also credited the garrison's installation food program manager, Ms. Velinda R. White for being very open to training this year's team with the local food experts at Kapiolani Community College and Y. Hata Executive Chefs program. "They will provide this year's team and future teams with the foundation and skills to compete with the best of the best," Perez said.

The team members for the all-Hawaii team were announced Tuesday. They are:  
Team manager Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class C.W. Francis III, US Army Garrison, Hawaii  
Team captain Sgt. Edmund Perez, 84<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion  
Staff Sgt. Anica P. Spencer, U.S. Army, Pacific Special Troops Battalion  
Spc. Emmanuel Gomez, 25<sup>th</sup> Division Special Troops Battalion,  
Spc. Lucas Ashley, F Co., 325<sup>th</sup> Brigade Support Battalion  
Spc. Cesar Sumauang, A Co., 45<sup>th</sup> Special Troops Battalion  
Spc Tony Sanders, G Co., 37 Forward Support  
Spc. Jeffrey Morgan, E Co., 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 25<sup>th</sup> Aviation Regiment  
Spc. Christopher Pope, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Special Troops Battalion  
Spc. Monique Sorrell-Johnson, USARPAC Special Troops Battalion  
Spc. Christopher Bohn, 540<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Co.  
Spc. Jason Nauta, E Co., 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 35<sup>th</sup> Regiment

The team will be leaving Feb. 26 for Fort Lee where they will compete with dozens of teams from the Army and the other services in several kinds of competition.

"It's a group of young soldiers," said team manager Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Francis. "We have some who have been on other culinary arts teams and some that don't have any experience. They bring a lot of new ideas and initiatives. It is a diverse team with the heart and drive of true Olympians. Our goal is to bring home the gold."

Article and photos by Les Ozawa, USARPAC public affairs office, tel. 438-6347

Judges SFC C.W. Francis III and Staff Sgt. David Marcelli (from left) discuss a entrée submission, while fellow judge Chef Alan Tsuchiyama of Kapiolani Community College records his score for the dish.



Spc. Jacob Trevino of 2<sup>nd</sup> Squadron, 6<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment displays a vegetarian dish prepared earlier by some of his colleagues.



Spc. Monique Sorrell-Johnson serves her entrée to Sgt. Edmund Perez, one of the four judges who helped select the Hawaii Army team for the Army-wide Culinary Arts competition at Ft. Lee, Virginia in March.



Spc. Emmanuel Gomez (at right) assists Spc. Christopher Pope prepare his chicken entrée for the judges.



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