BOUQUET GARNI

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The Bouquet Garni

Newsletter of the British Columbia Culinary Arts Specialist Association

President's Message

Happy June!

What an incredible year it has been. This school year has been filled with growth, learning, and opportunity in both my personal and professional life. Often, the two seem inseparable because I view what we do for a living as a journey—one where we are limited only by our willingness to learn, network, grow, and embrace new adventures. Perhaps it also helps that I consider many of my colleagues to be close friends.

There have been many exciting developments within BCCASA since the Winter edition of the Bouquet Garni, and I would like to take a moment to reflect on a few highlights.

First, I would like to extend a sincere thank you to Karen Carruthers and Meghan Dehghan for organizing the Halal Professional Development Day at Semiahmoo Secondary School. The event brought together teaching chefs, educators, farmers, and culinary professionals to share their knowledge and experiences surrounding Halal food and cuisine. I thought I had a solid understanding of Halal food practices before attending, but the presenters provided an incredible depth of knowledge that significantly broadened my perspective. I left with a much stronger understanding of what it means for food to be truly Halal and how we can better support the growing needs of our diverse student populations.

This year, I have also had the opportunity to host several colleagues in my own program. Every visit has been rewarding. Not only do I genuinely enjoy their company and the chance to connect, but I always walk away having learned something new. There is tremendous value in working alongside one another, sharing ideas, and learning through collaboration.

Another exciting initiative currently underway involves a group of BCCASA members gathering information from districts and teaching chefs regarding their roles within the Feeding Futures program. The goal is to better understand the many ways teaching kitchens across the province are accessing and utilizing these funds so that successful practices, ideas, and models can be shared with others. Through this work, I learned from Patrick Gale about a major food security conference taking place in Montreal.

As a result of those conversations, I had the privilege of attending the Nourishing Futures Forum in Montreal at the beginning of June. This two-day event brought together hundreds of school food representatives, coordinators, educators, chefs, dietitians, farmers, and community partners from across Canada. It was an

incredible opportunity to share stories, celebrate successes, discuss challenges, and learn about innovative projects taking place in school food programs nationwide.

One of the greatest takeaways for me was realizing just how fortunate we are in British Columbia. I had the opportunity to speak with professionals from every province and to share the work being done by BCCASA and our members. Again and again, I was reminded that teaching chefs in British Columbia are uniquely supported and equipped compared to many of our counterparts across Canada.

One story that particularly resonated with me came from a chef who teaches culinary arts in a converted home economics classroom. Despite having limited equipment, storage, and workspace, he, his students, and a dedicated group of volunteers prepare and serve more than 200 free lunches every day. Their commitment, determination, and passion for feeding students were truly inspiring. It challenged me to think about what more we can accomplish in our own schools and districts when we work together toward a common goal.

British Columbia was exceptionally well represented at the forum, and it was wonderful to connect with many of our provincial partners. I was pleased to spend time with representatives from the BC Chapter of the Coalition for Healthy School Food—which BCCASA now officially supports and holds a seat on the steering committee—as well as Farm to Cafeteria Canada and other organizations committed to improving food security and food literacy for students.

The past few months have been filled with meaningful collaboration, professional learning, and unforgettable experiences. I continue to be inspired by the passion, creativity, and dedication of our members. It is an exciting time to be involved in food education, and I am grateful to be part of such a supportive and innovative community.

As summer approaches, I look forward to some well-earned downtime, opportunities to travel, and time spent with family and friends. At the same time, I am already excited for the fall when we can return refreshed and ready to embrace another school year full of possibilities, new partnerships, and exciting opportunities for our students.

Thank you for everything you do to support food education in your schools and communities. I wish you a safe, relaxing, and well-deserved summer break, and I hope to see many of you in person at the annual BCCASA Conference and AGM this October.

Warm regards,

Trevor

Editor's note:

Holy submissions Batman!! Here I thought I was going to be light on material for this issue of the BG, but you came through BCCASA! Kudos on your great effort, easily the most I have ever received. Goes to show that chef teaching is alive & well and still inspirational in British Columbia!

I wish you all a fantastic and adventurous summer. I'll see you all in October at my school, Burnaby Central.

Your friendly neighbourhood editor,
Stephen Schram

Building a Sustainable, Inclusive School Meals Program

By Adam Jonas
Centennial Secondary, Coquitlam

Over the past few years, I have taken the lead in utilizing Feeding Futures funding at our school, with the goal of building a sustainable, more inclusive food program that provides universal access to meals and snacks for our population of approximately 1,600 students. From the outset, my goal has been to ensure that this work complemented, not disrupted our existing cafeteria program financially, while creating meaningful opportunities for all students to access food at school in a dignified way. The focus/purpose is on creating a nourishing environment that supports learning, ensuring students are not attending class on an empty stomach and are better able to focus on their learning.

Affordability is a significant day-to-day concern for both the school and the broader community, and rising costs have created challenges for teaching kitchens to provide affordable meals without increasing prices while still maintaining program budgets.

As a teaching chef at Centennial Secondary, through trial and error, I've had the opportunity to recently design and run a program that combines Feeding Futures funding, new community partnerships, and curriculum-based food preparation. This has helped reimagine how culinary programs can operate in current economic conditions while ensuring the program's vitality and purpose within our school community. I'm sharing our model in the hope that it offers practical ideas that all can utilize to adapt within your own programs.

Developing a school-based team and receiving Administration buy-in has been key. We are also supported by our Youth Workers and Education Assistants, and we rely heavily on student leadership to keep the program sustainable. Students are not just helping, they are running key parts of the operation, such as our salad bar, while developing organization and customer service skills.

Collaborations with BCCASA members and the Feeding Futures Sub-committee have provided insight into how other programs operate and how districts distribute funding. This information has helped advocate for increased funding and further program development at our school.

Starting with a Breakfast Program: Simple, Consistent, Universal

When we began utilizing Feeding Futures funding a few years ago, we started with a grab-and-go breakfast program in our school foyer each morning until 9:00 AM, serving approximately 40–60 students daily.

With a starting budget of $800/month, we kept the model intentionally simple to avoid added work on top of our already busy schedules:

- Cereal and milk
- Instant oatmeal with a hot water urn
- Yogurt
- Fruit and vegetables

- Granola bars and donated pastries

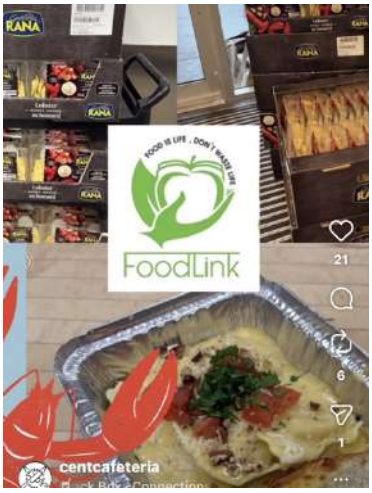
The key is consistency and accessibility. This model has been open to everyone, with no sign-ups or identification required, helping normalize participation and eliminate stigma.

We have stretched our budget through partnerships:

- Weekly donations from Cobbs Bread (picked up by our Education Assistant)
- Support from Coquitlam Rotary
- Food recovery through Food Link Society (connection made through a PAC parent)
- Fresh produce and cheese from the BC School Fruit & Vegetable Program

Universal Access with Targeted Support

Developed this past year after requesting additional funding from our principal and district assistant superintendent, we add support to our lunch program with an additional $1,200/month from Feeding Futures district funding.



This includes weekly deliveries from District supported Food Link Society, surplus food (e.g., dry and fresh pasta, veggie burgers, veggie ground, juice boxes, snacks), as well as farm-direct surplus items like apples, mushrooms, peppers, and pasta that were all in abundance and were shared across districts with adjacent teaching kitchens. This is also possible by Food Link Society through partnerships with groups like Second Harvest.

Each day, we:

- Discreetly provide lunch to 10–15 students at risk through our Youth Worker
- Feed 10–15 daily culinary student volunteers that assist with cafeteria service
- Provide 10–15 after-service meals/snacks as access for students who missed lunch or still need food or arrived without a lunch to school.
- Provide reduced cost or no-cost breakfast and lunch items when possible, with surplus deliveries from Food Link Society. (i.e. free hot breakfast wraps (800) and World Cup BBQ Friday June 12th).

We also run an afternoon snack program using surplus from Food Link and produce programs. It is stocked in the foyer fridge and cabinet and available to students independently when available.

Salad Bar & Soup Program

Our Salad Bar and Soup Program was rebooted and piloted twice weekly this spring to increase access to fresh, healthy food options. It also provides an affordable option for students and staff at $5.00 per meal, with Feeding Futures funds helping offset the rising cost of fresh produce.

This program also creates opportunities to utilize our school garden, promoting sustainability and wellness.

We serve 40–60 Salad Bar meals per day (Tuesday-Thursday), with students involved in:

- Prep and production
- Setup and display
- Service and ticket collection
- Cleanup and shutdown

We support our at risk 10–15 identified students each service and use teacher-issued tickets for:

- Students in need of food that day
- Recognizing leadership and positive contributions

Salad Bar Funding Model: Reducing Stigma Through Design

Adopting a universal access model:

- $5 per meal or $25 punch card
- Feeding Futures contributes $3.75 per portion to cover additional costs including takeout containers/cutlery
- Donations help fill the gaps and $5 purchases help support costs of the salad bar.

Because all students and staff use the same system, there is no visible difference between who pays and who does not. This has been critical in building trust and participation while reducing stigma.

We also reduce barriers by:

- Selling tickets through the school store
- Allowing purchases outside peak service times to avoid long lines

Student Leadership

We could not run this program without students.

Our junior and ELL school leadership students:

- Set up the salad bar during flex
- Manage service flow
- Support cleanup after lunch
- Our school "Trash Club" help with maintaining our school garden when needed

Kitchen apprentice students are integrated into:

- Daily preparation
- Inventory awareness
- Food safety and workflow
- Buffet design and setup
- Customer service and program management

What Is Making This Work

From a teaching chef perspective, several factors have been essential:

- Keeping the menu achievable within staffing and student skill levels
- Building community partnerships. Food recovery has been a game changer
- Designing for dignity, universal access removes barriers and stigma
- Prioritizing student ownership and leadership
- Aligning program operations with curriculum outcomes

Our program has evolved much more than a feeding initiative, it has become a community hub, and a support system for all students.

If you are building or refining a program in your own school, my biggest advice is: Start with what you can sustain, center it in learning, and let it grow through partnerships and student ownership. Reach out to other programs for support and share ideas and resources and community connections sources when possible.

Our program did not truly grow until we began collaborating beyond our school. That collaboration has been key to where we are today. It is still a work in progress, but something we are extremely proud of as we feel we are contributing to a positive change within our school community.

Celebrating 25 Years of Excellence

The Daniel Lesnes SD42 Chowder Competition Marks a Quarter Century of Culinary Learning

By Brent McGimpsey

On Friday, May 29, culinary students from across School District 42 gathered at Garibaldi Secondary School for a milestone event—the 25th Annual Daniel Lesnes SD42 Chowder Competition.

For a quarter century, this competition has provided an opportunity for young chefs to showcase their creativity, technical skills, teamwork, and passion for food. What began as a friendly culinary challenge has evolved into one of the most anticipated culinary education events in the district, fostering a spirit of excellence while celebrating the importance of experiential learning.

This year's competition welcomed teams from Thomas Haney Secondary, Maple Ridge Secondary, and Garibaldi Secondary. Students worked individually and in pairs to create original chowders from scratch, drawing inspiration from local ingredients, global flavours, family traditions, and personal culinary experiences. The resulting dishes highlighted not only technical skill, but also the creativity and individuality that make culinary education such a powerful learning experience.

From the moment the competition began, the energy in the room was unmistakable. Students carefully organized ingredients discussed final preparations with teammates, and transformed fresh local products into restaurant-quality dishes. Throughout the morning, judges, teachers, volunteers, and spectators watched as students demonstrated the professionalism, composure, and passion that define outstanding culinary programs.

More than a competition, the event represented what culinary education does best: bringing students together through food, collaboration, problem solving, and shared experiences.

Honouring a Legacy

The competition is named in honour of Chef Daniel Lesnes, whose passion for culinary education and commitment to student learning helped establish a tradition that continues to inspire new generations of young chefs.

Over the past 25 years, hundreds of students have participated in the event, many pursuing careers in the culinary and hospitality industries. The competition serves as both a celebration of culinary achievement and a reminder of the lasting impact that dedicated educators and mentors have on students' lives.

The Daniel Lesnes SD42 Chowder Competition has become much more than an annual event. It is a gathering of culinary educators, students, alumni, industry supporters, and community members who share a belief in the power of hands-on learning. Each year, students are challenged to think creatively, work collaboratively, and demonstrate

the skills they have developed through their culinary programs.

A beautifully crafted perpetual trophy, engraved with the names of past champions, stands as a testament to the rich history of the event and the many talented students who have contributed to its legacy.

Creativity on Display

This year's competition featured an impressive range of flavours, techniques, and presentations.

Students were challenged to create chowders that demonstrated balance, flavour development, texture, presentation, and originality. Throughout the event, judges moved from station to station, engaging students in discussions about ingredients, cooking methods, sourcing, and culinary inspiration.

The diversity of the entries reflected the evolving nature of culinary education in British Columbia. Traditional chowder techniques were paired with global flavours and locally sourced ingredients, creating dishes that were both innovative and deeply personal.

One of the highlights of the day was watching students confidently explain their culinary choices and tell the stories behind their dishes. These conversations showcased not only their cooking abilities, but also their communication skills, professionalism, and growing understanding of food systems and culinary culture.

The event room buzzed with excitement as students tasted, adjusted seasonings, plated final presentations, and eagerly awaited feedback from judges. Throughout the day, competitors supported one another, demonstrating the camaraderie and respect that have become hallmarks of the SD42 culinary community.

Celebrating Student Achievement

This year's competition showcased an exceptional level of culinary skill, creativity, and professionalism. Judges were faced with the difficult task of selecting winners from a field of outstanding entries that demonstrated both technical excellence and innovative flavour combinations.

Tied for Second Place were:

- **Cowboy Steak Chowder**
  - **Lilliana Magee and Kalin Onda**
    Garibaldi Secondary School
- **Thai Coconut Curry Halibut Chowder**
  - **Ocean Banfield and Teni Martens**
    Thomas Haney Secondary School

The Cowboy Steak Chowder impressed judges with its rich flavours, hearty composition, and excellent execution, while the Thai Coconut Curry Halibut Chowder stood out for its vibrant presentation and thoughtful balance of coastal ingredients and Southeast Asian flavours.

Taking First Place honours was:

- **Rainbow Trout Chowder**
  - **Finn Dion-Fell and Melody Fawcett**
    Maple Ridge Secondary School

What made the winning chowder particularly memorable was the story behind its signature ingredient. Finn personally caught the rainbow trout used in the dish while fishing with her grandfather. She then brought the fish into the Maple Ridge Secondary culinary program, where it was carefully filleted and prepared before becoming the centrepiece of the competition-winning chowder.

The resulting dish beautifully reflected the values of culinary education: technical skill, creativity, sustainability, and a meaningful connection to food. By bringing together family traditions, local ingredients, and professional

culinary techniques, Finn and Melody created a chowder that captured both the spirit of the competition and the essence of authentic food experiences.

Their victory was met with enthusiastic applause from fellow competitors and teachers alike, highlighting the supportive and celebratory atmosphere that defines the event.

More Than a Competition

While awards and trophies are certainly exciting, the true success of the Daniel Lesnes Chowder Competition can be found in the experiences students gain throughout the day.

Students develop technical culinary skills, time management, teamwork, professionalism, adaptability, and confidence. They learn to perform under pressure, accept feedback, support one another, and take pride in their accomplishments.

Equally important are the connections built between schools. Students from across the district have the opportunity to interact with peers who share similar interests and passions, helping strengthen the culinary education community within SD42.

Throughout the day, classrooms transformed into professional kitchens, learning spaces became culinary showcases, and students experienced the excitement and pride that comes from sharing their work with others.

The event was filled with laughter, encouragement, delicious food, friendly competition, and countless moments of learning. Teachers witnessed students rising to challenges, solving problems in real time, and demonstrating the skills that will serve them well both inside and outside the kitchen.

For many participants, the competition represented the culmination of months or even years of learning. It provided an authentic opportunity to apply classroom knowledge in a meaningful setting while building confidence and creating memories that will last long after graduation.

Looking Forward

As the Daniel Lesnes SD42 Chowder Competition celebrates its 25th anniversary, it stands as a powerful example of what culinary education can achieve when students are given authentic opportunities to create, compete, and succeed.

The event continues to honour its history while inspiring the next generation of chefs, food professionals, and community leaders. It reflects the dedication of culinary educators throughout SD42 and the remarkable students who bring passion, creativity, and enthusiasm to their craft every day.

After twenty-five years, one thing remains unchanged: the competition is about much more than chowder.

It is about mentorship.

It is about community.

It is about learning.

Most importantly, it is about students discovering what they are capable of achieving.

Here's to the next twenty-five years of culinary excellence.

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WHAT'S (ELSE IS) GOING ON

…around British Columbia

Halal Culinary Education Takes Centre Stage at Semiahmoo Secondary

By Stephen Schram & Karen Curruthers

Semiahmoo Secondary buzzed with energy on May 1 as culinary educators from across the region gathered for a full-day Halal Cooking Educational Seminar—an event that blended cultural learning, industry expertise, and exceptional food. Organized by Chef Meghan Dehghan and Chef Karen Carruthers, the day offered a rare opportunity for teachers to deepen their understanding of halal food systems through direct conversations with producers, processors, and chefs who work in the field every day.

From Chef Curruthers: "Last year, several students from our Muslim community approached me to share that they felt underrepresented in our cafeteria menu and school food celebrations. Their honesty opened the door to an important conversation about inclusion, representation, and belonging within our school community. In response, I began working closely with these students to develop a Ramadan celebration menu. They generously shared family recipes, cultural traditions, and ideas, and played an active role in sourcing ingredients, preparing food, and educating others about the significance of Ramadan. Together, we created a meaningful culinary experience that was embraced by our entire school community. What began as a single project quickly led to broader conversations about representation in our cafeteria program and how we could better reflect the diverse cultures and traditions of our students. As a result, we have continued to expand our menu offerings and increase our understanding of Muslim food practices, traditions, and dietary needs. Through discussions with other teaching chefs in the region, it became clear that many educators expressed a desire to learn more about Halal practices and protocols so they could authentically and respectfully incorporate these foods into their programs."

The morning opened with an engaging presentation from Todd Reiswig of Maple Leaf Foods, who guided attendees through the company's long history with halal products. He explained how Maple Leaf developed its halal lines, the certification processes involved, and the company's ongoing commitment to serving diverse communities across Canada. For many educators, it was an eye-opening look at how large-scale producers maintain halal integrity from processing to packaging—knowledge that can be brought directly into classroom discussions about sourcing and food systems.

Representatives Ryan Gibson and Joe from Rossdown Farms followed with a deep dive into their fully halal, vertically integrated poultry operation. Their presentation highlighted Rossdown's

dedication to ethical and transparent production, including their Gap 2 certification, RWA (Raised Without Antibiotics) practices, and organic offerings. Their explanation of what it means to be fully halal certified—from hatchery to harvest—gave us a clearer understanding of how halal values intersect with animal welfare and sustainability.

As the learning continued, the aroma of lunch began drifting through the halls, hinting at the culinary showcase to come. The midday meal, prepared by Chef Qasim Mehmood and the talented team from Salt & Steak Restaurant, became a highlight of the day. The chefs crafted a menu of halal-friendly dishes that were both contemporary and deeply rooted in tradition, demonstrating how thoughtful technique and cultural respect can come together on the plate. Chef Qasim also shared insights into developing halal menus in modern restaurant settings, offering educators practical ideas to bring back to their own teaching kitchens.

Chef Curruthers continues: *"Inspired by this experience, the student went on to create a beautiful Grade 12 Capstone Project focused on cultural representation, food, and community. Watching this project grow from a student conversation into meaningful change within our school and beyond has been a rewarding experience."*

BCCASA extends sincere thanks to Chef Dehghan and Chef Carruthers for their leadership, to Maple Leaf Foods, Rossdown Farms, and Salt & Steak Restaurant for their generosity and expertise, and to all the educators who attended with curiosity and enthusiasm. The day was a reminder of how powerful it can be when industry and education come together with a shared purpose: to teach, to learn, and to celebrate the rich diversity of the culinary world.

Indigenous-Inspired Lunch Brings Learning, Culture, and Community Together at Delta Secondary
By Lori Pilling

Recently, 120 staff members at Delta Secondary School (DSS) gathered to share an Indigenous-inspired lunch that blended culture, learning, and community. The meal was the result of a collaborative partnership between Steven Fecho, Executive Chef at the Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre, and Lori Pilling, Culinary & Baking Arts Chef Instructor.

Chef Fecho worked alongside Chef Pilling to share Indigenous culinary traditions with nine advanced students from the DSS Culinary Arts program to prepare a meal rooted in cultural knowledge, respect, and hands-on learning. "Chef Fecho delivered a Pro-D event for teachers at the Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre, which showed me he was open to sharing his knowledge," said Chef Pilling. "This was a valuable opportunity for students to work

with exclusive ingredients. Steve spent hours harvesting ingredients in the days before the lunch, and then we shared with students how to culturally prepare the food."

Students spent three hours preparing the staff lunch. While Chefs Fecho and Pilling emphasized the importance of efficiency and accuracy in the kitchen, they also shared the importance of slowing down to respect the ingredients. Chef Fecho spoke to the cultural significance of each ingredient and explained the traditional preparation methods.

"We made every effort to work with ingredients from scratch," Chef Pilling explained. "For example, we created a smoked salmon Caesar salad dressing. Students had previously learned about emulsification, but this gave them a meaningful opportunity to practice and apply their skills."

The menu featured a wide range of Indigenous ingredients and techniques. Students prepared Xusuem—often referred to as Indigenous ice cream by Indigenous people—by whipping soapberry juice into a dense foam. They also learned how to cook Elk in three different styles, safely handle stinging nettles, and honour Indigenous foods while incorporating North American and European culinary methods.

Menu highlights included clafoutis, a French custard reimagined with hazelnuts, Saskatoon berries, and lemon balm curd. Students created a fresh salad using dandelion leaves, wild kale, and infused young spruce tips into a Caesar salad dressing alongside Bannock croutons. Beverage options included lemon balm iced tea and mixed berry juices, using ingredients native to British Columbia.

"What resonated with me most was the real-world relevance of this experience," said Laura Tait, Director of Indigenous Education. "I often speak about integrating Indigenous content and pedagogy, and this gathering achieved both seamlessly and respectfully. Chef Fecho started the meal with a beautiful explanation of everything—what the foods were, how they were prepared, and the connections to the Squamish and Lil'wat people."

Indigenous Cultural Mentor Nathan Wilson provided the protocol that is required before eating, reinforcing the important of respect and ceremony in Indigenous culture.

For Chef Pilling, the experience offered students learning that extended far beyond culinary skills. "This was incredibly valuable for students," she said. "They weren't just learning new recipes—they were learning about culture, collaboration, and respect. Working alongside Chef Fecho gave them a meaningful, hands-on experience and deeper understanding of Indigenous ways, and how food connects people, history, and community."

Chef Pilling reserved some ingredients so students could recreate the meal independently the following day. "They truly enjoyed the experience, and it was wonderful to see the pride they felt in what they had learned and created."

DSS Principal Rick Mesich emphasized that the event also served to honour DSS staff. "This lunch was a heartfelt expression of appreciation for our staff and

the work they do every day to inspire and nurture thriving, future-ready learners," he said. "At the same time, it highlighted the power of experiential learning for our students."

"I look forward to a time when this kind of meaningful integration can happen across all subject areas," Laura Tait concluded.

Newman's Fine Foods Visits Delta Secondary
By Lori Pilling

Butchery is one of the oldest professions in the world of culinary arts and plays an important role in the food programs at Delta Secondary School. When Newman Fine Foods, the family-owned butchery, located in Tsawwassen, volunteered to demonstrate the arts of butchery, DSS students were delighted to take the opportunity to learn about a variety of different cuts of meat, entrepreneurship, and the butchery and deli profession.

Owner Heath Newman and his assistant Preston King joined the Delta Secondary staff and culinary students for a day of learning. Bringing with them the hind quarter of a cow, that was butchered to educate the students on the difference between specific cuts of meat, tenderization, and how Newman's foods sources their products. This unique experience allowed students to better their understanding of meats and helped them in their journey within the field of culinary arts. One student commented that it was "surprising to see how easily Heath butchered the hind quarter from his many years of experience" The students also learned about the economics of running a butchery and Newman Fine Foods strong belief in forming a meaningful connection with their customers.

The Delta Secondary students and staff would once again like to thank Newman Fine Foods for the educational experience they provided.

Storytelling Through Food: Veal Stock, Hot Dogs, and BC Ferries
By Connor Knickerbocker

After competing at regionals last year Finn Gow-Hignell, a now grade 12 student at Brooks Secondary, was ready for more.

But cooking isn't his only passion. A young track enthusiast with a future in aviation, Finn is composed and hard working. He's also a teenager, who loves to socialize and hang with his friends.

Growing up in Powell River, he is no stranger to BC Ferries. As we travelled to the island, then to Abbotsford, he overcame sailing waits and cancelled routes. After a 14-hour commute to the Fraser Valley my advice to him before the competition was to simply have fun.

We had to chance the longer Vancouver Island route home again due to more sailing cancellations on the Sunshine Coast. Another delayed ferry departure had us concerned we would miss the last sailing from Comox to Powell River. As chance had it, we rolled onto the Salish Orca with minutes to spare. I exhaled, put my seat back, and opened my email.

"Finn is going to Toronto, he won gold."

Fast forward a few weeks, and many tarte tatins later, we find ourselves at the base of the CN tower, on our way to the Enercare Center.

Finn had a few hiccups during the competition, which is understandable, almost to be expected. He submitted his appetizer and entrée late but finished strong with his dessert on time.

It was great to watch him and the other competitors, and to meet some of the other chef instructors and learn about what they do in their respective kitchens. It was certainly competitive, but not in a toxic way. Everyone was very supportive of all the students.

The main thing is that after a 9-hour competition Finn was happy with the work he did. He was tired but his cup was full. I was and am so proud of him.

My aunties came in from Montreal to support Finn. They are both retired professors- lovers of both learning and competition. They were great cheerleaders and took us out for a very fancy Greek dinner afterwards a stone's throw away from the hotel. Finn watched the waiter flambé saganaki tableside, we had tender grilled squid and braised lamb shanks.

It was the perfect way to end the day, and we talked about the act of storytelling through food: it being a timeless way to connect with family, friends, and strangers.

We swapped stories about a controversial (and suggestively rigged) pie competition in rural Quebec, sharing Belgian chocolates with a grandparent (who had dementia) during their last days, a forgotten-in-the-oven-for-days ginger cake turned charcoal, and Yorkshire puddings gone wrong. We talked about how the documentary My Octopus Teacher makes us question eating the deliciously intelligent cephalopod, meanwhile we didn't seem to have a problem eating it's relative the squid.

A false assumption about cooks and chefs is the idea that we only want to talk about, cook, and consume fine dining food ... which while I'm sure sometimes is true, it often isn't. I explained to the table that I'd like to share a food story about Finn that happened on this trip that has nothing to do with the competition, which both confused Finn and got his attention. The story goes:

Tuesday was Loonie hotdog night at the Blue Jays game. We had just come off a red eye flight from Vancouver and understandably we were both a bit tired. We walked to the stadium from the hotel and the crowds got thicker, excitement grew. Finn inquired how many hot dogs we could get, and I smiled and pulled out a $50 dollar bill. He grinned from ear to ear.

Sadly, the name Loonie hotdog night is misleading as they only accept credit or debit as payment. Nevertheless, Finn decides that 4 hot dogs each is a perfectly acceptable number to start. As sports games go, we have just enough time to grab our flat of dogs, too many packages of condiments and weave our way up to the 500 level to our seats to meet the rest of Team BC.

Directly in from of us sits a women, and a large muscular man with a tiny tank top on, his back and shoulder muscles exposed. Forgetting my manners, I start inhaling my dogs, barely taking time to open my tiny ketchup mustard and relish packages. By the time I'm done, I look over and Finn has all his dogs laid out neatly in his cardboard tray, aluminum foil folded back

with care, his sauces expertly applied with precision and grace. "Chef look at my Mise En Place."

Sometimes I wonder who the teacher is.

As typical sports games go, we must (fairly often) stand up and let others access their seat. I curse their unknown names for interrupting my grotesque, shameful feasting ritual of the dogs. As we stand to let a perfectly polite lady pass, Finn steps on a fallen ketchup packet, of which the contents are swiftly propelled directly into the rear armpit and back of the muscular fan in front of us. His girlfriend's white shirt was also target to the beloved red condiment. Clearly confused as to why he's target of such an act, he looks back and we lock eyes. I give him the "I'm so sorry about that but you shouldn't have been standing there" eyes, and he returns his gaze to Ernie Clement at bat.

Finn somehow oblivious to this violent red assault on skin and fabric sits down and takes his first bite. "Thanks for the dogs Mr. K."

We watch a Jay's grand slam. The roof is open; cotton candy skies fall behind the CN tower. We're not in Powell River anymore.

After a sound night's sleep and a weight off our shoulders, we viewed the second day of competitions. Finn is excited to get the free swag from various booths and watch Simon Martin, a very impressive young cook from Nanaimo who is competing in Nationals for his 3rd time, and having won last year at the secondary level will compete this year in the post-secondary cohort.

On Saturday, we attended closing ceremonies. Finn ending up placing second and earning a silver medal at the national stage, but that's only one part of his story.

Afterwards we ate tacos from a restaurant that imports masa from Mexico. They were excellent. Tonight we're going out for a 12-course tasting menu at my old sous chef's restaurant "Ayla- a love letter to Hong Kong.

Chef Danvee knows I'm bringing a young award-winning chef and I'm sure, as chefs do, she's going to roll out the red carpet for an old friend.

I'm sure at least one more food story will be made.

Finn's Menu

cucumber and tomato gazpacho
julienne of red pepper, grilled flatbread

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chicken chasseur
bacon wrapped chicken roulade with spinach mousseline

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pomme anna, Vichy carrots, butternut squash puree, veal & mushroom reduction

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apple tarte tatin
Chantilly, caramel, candied lemon

Why Landing That First Kitchen Job Can Be So Much Better with A Smarter Way Forward.

Hospitalityhire.io

By Chef Robert Belcham

All culinary instructors and mentors working with young people entering the hospitality industry have a front row seat to their potential. The traditional path to finding work often creates unnecessary hurdles for new cooks, but there is a better approach that opens up exciting opportunities.

Students often invest significant time crafting resumes and sending applications, yet many face slow or non-existent responses. This can lead them to accept the first available role, even when it might not fully align with their aspirations. Hospitality Hire offers a positive alternative that empowers them from the start.

Hospitality Hire is a reverse talent marketplace designed specifically for the North American hospitality industry. It allows young cooks to create a profile that highlights what they are looking for, so motivated employers can discover and reach out to them.

Here is how it works.

Students upload their resume and use the built in AI tool to strengthen it. They then clearly describe their goals including the role, salary range, preferred cuisine, kitchen style, location, schedule and other priorities. The platform uses location first matching, so their profile reaches restaurants hotels and catering companies in their preferred cities across Canada such as Vancouver, Kelowna, Victoria, Edmonton and Calgary.

Once the profile is active students can concentrate fully on their training and gaining valuable kitchen experience. They remain visible to opportunities even when they are not actively searching. Employers pay a fee to search the platform and unlock profiles that match their requirements.

This creates a refreshing shift. In the traditional system new cooks often carry the full burden of proving themselves. With Hospitality Hire employers are encouraged to present their strongest opportunities competitive pay desirable schedules and positive working environments to attract talented candidates who have clearly shared their expectations.

For students beginning their journeys as cooks this builds confidence and sets them up for success. They gain the chance to connect with roles that truly match their skills and ambitions leading to more fulfilling starts greater satisfaction and promising long-term careers in hospitality.

Early access is open now. Instructors are encouraged to share this opportunity with their classes so students can build profiles ahead of the full launch and gain an advantage. The link is hospitalityhire.io.

Thank you for the inspiring work you do guiding the next generation of hospitality talent toward bright futures.

BCCASA Conference Oct.23 & 24 2026

BCTF

BURNABY

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Urban Food Production

Join educators, chefs, and industry professionals for two days of learning, collaboration, and innovation in urban food production.

Hosted by Chef Stephen Schram and Chef Dave Johnson.

The 2026 BCCASA Conference will bring together food educators and industry leaders to explore innovative approaches to growing, producing, and sustaining food in urban environments. Through engaging presentations, hands-on learning experiences, and valuable networking opportunities, participants will discover practical strategies that can be applied directly in their classrooms and programs. This conference is designed to inspire educators, strengthen professional practice, and support lifelong learning while exploring emerging trends shaping the future of food systems.

Whether you are looking to expand your knowledge, gain fresh inspiration, or connect with colleagues who share your passion for food education, this conference offers a unique opportunity to learn from experts and collaborate with peers from across British Columbia.

Register today and be part of the conversation shaping tomorrow's food systems.

CONFERENCE LOCATIONS:

Friday, October 23, 2026
Burnaby Central Secondary School
6011 Deer Lake Parkway
Burnaby, BC

Saturday, October 24, 2026
LaSalle College Vancouver
2808 Bradfield Court
Vancouver, BC

Friday, October 23

8:30-9:00	BCCASA Annual General Meeting
9:00-9:30	Conference Registration & Welcome Reception hosted by the BCSS Culinary Program - Coffee, tea, cold drinks, light snack
9:30-10:00	Welcome & opening remarks
10:00-12:00	Educational Sessions 1 & 2
12:00-1:00	Lunch provided by BCSS Culinary Program, assisted by NWSS students
1:00-3:00	Educational Sessions 3 & 4
3:30-3:45	Walk to Burnaby Museum
3:45-4:45	Burnaby Museum
4:45 – 5:00	Walk to Hart House
5:00	Dinner at Hart House

Saturday, October 24

9:00-3:00	LaSalle College – Interactive Culinary and Baking Learning Experience: Promoting Collegial Collaboration, Professional Networking

Registration is completed in two simple steps.

STEP #1 Register Online

Last name A to M, please register at: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/YK8WSXF
Last name N – Z, please register at: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/3S53V8C

STEP #2 Submit Payment

Your registration is confirmed once payment has been received by the BCCASA Treasurer.
E-transfer: **BCCASAconference@gmail.com**

Conference Fee:

Early Member Registration -- Register by June 30, 2026- $325.00

Regular Member Registration – $375.00

Non-Member - $500.00

Space is limited. Early registration is encouraged.

IN-N-OUT CHEFS

A Series of Q & A's aimed at getting to know new Culinary Arts Teachers in BC, while at the same time saying farewell and thank you to Chef Teachers at the end of this journey.

IN!

Tell us about yourself, where are you from, did you do cook training, what led you into a career in cooking professionally?

My name is Raul Copete, and I am originally from Spain. I completed my culinary training up to the Red Seal level at VCC (Vancouver Community College). I have travelled to several countries and worked in the hospitality industry, including Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, and now Canada. Although I am originally a Civil Engineer, my passion for food comes from my childhood. I learned to cook very early in life and have always been curious about new foods, flavours, and fragrances. I decided to pursue culinary arts professionally after meeting my wife—she gave me the final push I needed. In 2018, I earned my Red Seal, and a few months later my wife, daughter, and I moved back to Spain, where I worked at a three-Michelin-star restaurant for a year. Unfortunately, because of Covid, we decided to return to Canada, but I learned and experienced a great deal during that year.

Where did you work as a chef? Can you talk about a major highlight from your career?

I have worked in places such as the Westbury Hotel in Dublin, Ireland; Tasca Restaurant in Auckland, New Zealand; an Irish pub called Dub Linn Gate by Science World in Vancouver (now closed); and a Michelin-star restaurant, Akelare, in San Sebastián, Spain. For the most part, I learned and grew at Hart House Restaurant in Burnaby, BC, where I went from Garde Manger all the way up to Executive Chef. The major highlight of my career has been going from simply loving food and cooking at home to taking it seriously—turning it into my profession through proper training and eventually managing a busy restaurant for over two years.

Was there an 'aha' moment where you knew you needed a new career? What led you to teaching? Did you look at any other careers?

The aha moment had been in my mind since my time at VCC. I really admired the chefs there. A few of them helped me constantly, guiding me toward the right decisions. I loved listening to them and learning from them, and I consider them my unofficial mentors because of how much I gained from their support. I realized that sooner rather than later, I wanted to become a teacher and pass along what I had learned. What ultimately pushed me toward education was my love for my family—my wife and kids. After two years as an Executive Chef, I realized how quickly time was passing, and I knew I had to choose between continuing on that demanding career path or choosing them.

What was the year in the education program like? How did it influence your path as a chef teacher?
I recently registered at UBC in the Chef Teaching Program, and I hope this program will give me the tools I need to better understand how to teach. As professional chefs, we are always in a rush, with very little time to explain things. I know I need to learn to slow down and explain things more clearly, and I'm hoping to develop those skills at UBC.

How has your first year a teacher been? What real time lessons have you learned? What has been the biggest learning curve?

This first—and hopefully not last—year as a Chef Teacher has been an interesting one. I was hired in the last week of August with only a week to prepare for the school year. I had zero experience working with high-school students and was also juggling another job at the same time. It was a rough start, but I can say that I managed to survive. The cooking part is obviously the easiest for me. It's the teaching that I need to learn and improve. Coming from VCC, where most students want to become chefs or are at least genuinely interested in food, the cafeteria program was a big shift. Many of the students don't even like to eat anything other than fries, so engaging some of them was challenging. I did my best to introduce them to new foods, teach them safety and sanitation in the kitchen, and show them how a real cafeteria operates in case they one day get their first job in a kitchen. I hope they understood and appreciated what I tried to teach them.

What advice would you offer other new chef teachers?
My best advice is to learn how to make students engage—let them participate and allow them to express themselves. I have many students from different backgrounds, and I always see them happiest and most engaged when they get to make food from their own countries or when they have input in the menu.

Anything you wanna add?
I would like to say that, unfortunately, the way the program is currently set up puts too much pressure on the limited time we have to teach. We are expected to produce food for a large number of students with very little help—there is only one assistant available in the Surrey district. In my opinion, the district should be hiring assistants to ensure safety and sanitation, to create a strong teaching environment, and to give the chef-teacher the ability to actually teach while also ensuring the food is prepared properly and served on time.

OUT! (kind of…)

Tell us about yourself

My name is Brian Roodenrys. Back in Ontario, my family owned two restaurants, and we also ran a flight kitchen called Air Cuisine. When I was in Grade 10, my parents asked if I wanted to go to school in the Netherlands — and that became my first big adventure. I began my culinary journey in Grades 11 and 12 in Voorhout, attending a Dutch trade school.

I later returned to Toronto to begin my apprenticeship at the Constellation Hotel. It was an amazing experience — challenging, demanding, and life-changing. My main goal at the time was to travel; it was a working person's

way to see the world. After finishing my apprenticeship, I went to BC and got a job at Big White, working a ski season at the Red Onion Restaurant in Kelowna. It became clear to me that I needed to go somewhere I could truly grow as a chef, so I returned to the Netherlands for a few years to work in Michelin one-star restaurants.

Where did you work as a chef? Can you share a major highlight from your career?
I began my career as a banquet chef in New York City. I met my wife while working at the Barbizon Hotel. From there, I became the Head of Room Service at the Marriott Marquis in Times Square. After getting married, I received an offer to be the chef at a law firm — Strook, Strook & Lavan — which served only lunch.

When did you realize you had fully transitioned from professional chef to chef-teacher?
When I got the job in the Surrey School District. It took a few years to realize how much joy I found in working with students. Over time, I discovered a deep passion for helping young people explore their options in high school and beyond.

What changes have you seen in Culinary Arts classrooms over the years?
The biggest change I've noticed is the number of students who do not have jobs outside of high school. Without some real kitchen experience, many students don't fully understand what working in the industry truly means.

Can you share one or more major highlights from your career as a chef-teacher?

- We catered 17 Music Society banquets.
- Our program has won several Surrey Chili Cook-off Competitions.
- We had students compete at Skills Canada in Abbotsford.
- A few of my students have started their own businesses, including catering companies.
- One of my former students is now one of the top chefs in BC — she is the Head Chef at an eco-resort.

Where do you see the Culinary Arts curriculum going? What could make our classrooms even better?
In my travels, I've seen teaching kitchens with gardens, and I was amazed. A fruit and vegetable program is a powerful way to teach students about local cuisine and sustainability. Where I've seen the most success for students considering a culinary career is through field trips to cooking colleges. Exposure to real post-secondary kitchens inspires them and helps them understand the next steps.

What advice would you offer new chef-teachers?
The best advice I can give is this: Learn as much as possible in the areas of the kitchen where you feel least confident. The more you grow, the more you can pass on to your students.

Anything you want to add?
If I may add a comment about teaching chefs: I've heard from many students over the years that their chef-teacher was their favourite teacher in school. I believe this is because we show up as our authentic selves — and students appreciate and value that.

Thanks Chef Roodenrys! Enjoy your time, even though your now teaching elementary school!

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NOTES FROM THE BACK OF HOUSE

...great thoughts on what we do

North America's 50 Best restaurants 2026 includes 14 Canadian locations.

Story by Laura Brehaut

Accessed at: https://theprovince.com/life/food/north-americas-50-best-restaurants-2026/wcm/0517d23e-ea8d-4193-9cd4-0e3529e15850

With half of the restaurants in the top 10, Canada had a strong showing in the second edition of North America's 50 Best Restaurants. Following Chicago's Smyth in top place, Eight in Calgary took the No. 2 spot, winning the Highest New Entry Award. Restaurant Pearl Morissette in Lincoln, Ont., Dakar NOLA in New Orleans and Mon Lapin in Montreal rounded out the top five.

The 2026 edition was announced at an awards ceremony in New Orleans on May 28. This year's list includes 14 restaurants from Canada and 36 from the United States. Though two Caribbean restaurants made last year's list, none ranked this year. (Mexico is included in Latin America's 50 Best Restaurants .)

Led by husband-and-wife chefs John Shields and Karen Urie Shields, Smyth rose to No. 1 from No. 4 on the inaugural 2025 list. Last year's top restaurant, Atomix in New York, fell to No. 7 in the ranking.

"What sets Smyth apart is its deeply personal approach to cooking, rooted in a tight network of growers and purveyors. The result is an ever-evolving tasting experience that feels both intimate and precise, and one in which each dish reflects the season of the time," according to 50 Best.

Eight, where Darren MacLean offers a 20-course "Canadian reflection" menu to eight diners at four services each week, was named the Best Restaurant in West Canada 2026. Restaurant Pearl Morissette took the honour for central Canada, and Mon Lapin for the east.

50 Best compares exclusive Eight to a speakeasy, tucked behind a door in a hotel lobby. "Each course is crafted with seasonal, local ingredients highlighting Canada's cultural heritage. The chef's table format allows guests to discuss the menu with the chef as he prepares the highly inventive plates, gaining insight into the technique and story behind each dish. The ever-changing menu might feature creations ranging from veal sweetbreads with kohlrabi kimchi to a chocolate tart infused with roasted mushrooms and smoked whipped cream."

Restaurant Pearl Morissette (No. 3), led by chefs Daniel Hadida and Eric Robertson in Ontario's Niagara wine region, is widely lauded for its farm-to-table cuisine. © North America's 50 Best Restaurants

Other award winners include San Francisco's Atelier Crenn (No. 44), which was honoured for its leadership in sustainability, "highest climber" Albi (No. 6) in Washington, D.C., and Restaurant Pearl Morissette, recipient of the Art of Hospitality Award for 2026. The two-star, 40-seat restaurant in Ontario's Niagara wine region, led by chefs Daniel Hadida and Eric Robertson, is widely lauded for its farm-to-table cuisine.

"What really sets Restaurant Pearl Morissette apart is how effortlessly the team combines creativity, sustainability and genuine care for their guests. Every visit feels personal and considered, and that's exactly what the Art of Hospitality Award celebrates," a spokesperson for North America's 50 Best Restaurants said in a statement in April.

Eighteen new restaurants made their debut on this year's list,

including Eight, Edulis (No. 25) in Toronto, Sabayon (No. 34) in Montreal, AnnaLena (No. 35) in Vancouver, Wild Blue (No. 47) in Whistler, B.C., and The Pine (No. 48) in Collingwood, Ont.

"The second edition of North America's 50 Best Restaurants celebrates the extraordinary diversity, creativity and excellence that define the region's dining scene," Faye Huggett, director of community for North America's 50 Best Restaurants, said in a statement. "From pioneering dining institutions to bold new voices, the list reflects the depth and dynamism of North America's rich culinary landscape."

List of Canadian restaurants in the Top 50 of North America:

No. 2: Eight (Calgary, AB)

No. 3: Restaurant Pearl Morissette (Lincoln, ON)

No. 5: Mon Lapin (Montreal, QC)

No. 8: Quetzal (Toronto, ON)

No. 9: Tanière3 (Quebec City, QC)

No. 15: Le Violon (Montreal, QC)

No. 17: Published on Main (Vancouver, BC)

No. 25: Edulis (Toronto, ON)

No. 27: Beba (Montreal, QC)

No. 28: Mhel (Toronto, ON)

No. 34: Sabayon (Montreal, QC)

No. 35: AnnaLena (Vancouver, BC)

No. 47: Wild Blue (Whistler, BC)

No. 48: The Pine (Collingwood, ON

See full list here: www.theworlds50best.com/northamerica/en/list/1-50

THE EXECUTIVE

President
Trevor Randle
trevor_randle@sd42.ca
Maple Ridge Secondary / 604.463.4175

1st Vice President
Lori Pilling
lpilling@deltaschools.ca
Delta Secondary / 604.946.4194

2nd Vice President
Stephen Schram
stephen.schram@burnabyschools.ca
Burnaby Central Secondary / 604.296.6850

Treasurer
Barbara Botter
barbara.botter@sd68.bc.ca
Cedar Community Secondary / 250.722.2414

Secretary
Meghan Dehghan
dehghan_m@surreyschools.ca
Semiahmoo Secondary / 604-536-5131

Director
Brent McGimpsey
Brent_mcgimpsey@sd42.ca
Garibaldi Secondary / 604.702.8756

2nd Director
Karen Carruthers
Karen_Carruthers@sd42.ca
Thomas Haney Secondary / 604-463-2001

Chairman of the Board
Brian Smith
Brian_Smith@sd42.ca
Thomas Haney Secondary / 604.463.2001

Have something to share?
Response to an article?
Great recipes?
Wanna join the Executive?

LET US KNOW!

Please send any communication to
BCCulinaryArtsSpecialists@gmail.com

It is important that we keep
BCCASA current,
Sharing the ideas and voice of Chef Instructors
throughout British Columbia

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