

DINING SEEN



Master Chefs

Schoolcraft College sets the quality standard for culinary art.

BY MARY MELDRUM
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JERRY ZOLYNSKY

There's no higher credential than Master Chef for those involved in the culinary arts, and it's no easy task to achieve. For the first time since 2014, the eight-day exam given by the American Culinary Federation (ACF) that determines which candidates will become Certified Master Chefs (CMC) was held at Schoolcraft College in Livonia.

Before the test, there were only 65 CMCs and 10 Certified Master Pastry Chefs (CMPCs) in the entire country. Three of those chefs were at Schoolcraft College. Now it can add one more name: Certified Master Chef Shawn Loving, who took the exam and passed this fall — one of only three of the 10 people who took the test and passed.

Schoolcraft College has a national reputation for its culinary arts program. The quality, creativity and professional excellence is accompanied by the strength of the expertise of its faculty. The campus has one of the most technically advanced teaching

Chefs Joseph Decker, Jeffery Gabriel and Brian Beland.

kitchens in the country, the site for this year's CMC exam.

To qualify to apply for the exam, candidates must already be a Certified Executive Chef or a Certified Culinary Educator, provide two letters of recommendation from current CMCs or CMPCs, and have completed the education courses on sanitation and food safety, management, cost management and wine.

The progressive eight-day exam evaluated candidates in areas of healthy cooking, buffet catering, classical cuisine, freestyle cooking, global cuisine, baking and pastry, continental and Northern European cuisines, and "market basket," a mystery basket of ingredients from which examinees prepared a five-course meal.

To progress to the next day's exam, candidates had to maintain an average score of 75 out of 100 points. Scores were tallied based on kitchen skills, plate presentation and, of course, taste.

SEEN had the chance to meet the Michigan chefs involved in the exam.

CMC BRIAN BELAND



Chef Brian Beland is executive chef at the Country Club of Detroit and a full-time culinary instructor at Schoolcraft College. Beland is a graduate of the Culinary Institute

of America (CIA) and of Michigan State University's School of Hospitality Business.

Beland is on the American Culinary Federation's Certification Commission and acted as the host site administrator for the exam. He was also one of the 28 evaluators who oversaw the 10 culinarians who



sought the title of CMC.

"I am kind of the linchpin for linking the chef candidates, the chef evaluators and working with the host site in its preparation and training, along with the American Federation administration," he said.

CMC JEFFREY GABRIEL

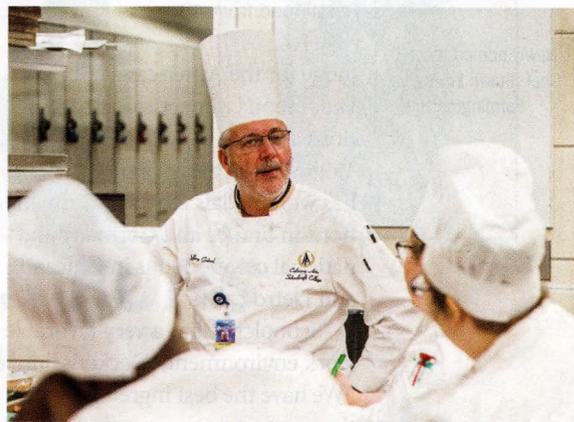


An educator at Schoolcraft College for more than 30 years, Chef Jeffrey Gabriel was another of the evaluators for the CMC exam. He evaluated baking, nutrition and *garde*

manger — the French term for cold food preparation, such as appetizers and cold platters.

A graduate of the Culinary Institute of America, Gabriel has been a member of several Culinary Olympic teams, winning Olympic gold medals, including two with distinction. He has also won 10 National American Culinary Federation medals.

Gabriel teaches the coursework for the department's Certificate in Baking/Pastry program.



ABOVE: Chef Jeffrey Gabriel lectures his class.

CMPC JOSEPH DECKER



Chef Joseph Decker is the creator and teacher of coursework for Schoolcraft's Certificate in Baking/Pastry program and this was his third time as an evaluator for

AFC certification exams. He is one of only 10 Certified Master Pastry Chefs in the United States, and while he has been an evaluator for the CMPC exam twice before, this year was the first time he evaluated the pastry portion of the CMC exam.

Decker is also a certified national

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Newly named Master Chef Shawn Loving of Farmington Hills.

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judge for the American Culinary Federation culinary salon competitions and was a member of the U.S. 1995 World Pastry Cup Team. He has won medals in world competitions in France and Germany and national competitions in Chicago and Detroit.

“Schoolcraft has a very favorable work environment,” Decker said. “We have the best ingredients and the most contemporary equipment, and we believe in faculty development.

“Our faculty development is very different than going to a seminar or lecture on the latest quantum mechanics, etc. Ours is more along the lines of investigating a cutting-edge chef in a pastry shop in Paris that we need to go research, and they support us in that respect.

“There are certain procedures that are unique and new,” he said, “so the technical aspects of pastry are as challenging as any other field of science. It is food science that we do here, and it needs to be artistic, too.”

During the summer months, Decker supports the continuing education program at Schoolcraft College by introducing seventh- to

ninth-graders to the professional chef’s kitchen.

CMC SHAWN LOVING

Before the exam, there were eight Certified Master Chefs in Michigan. Chef Shawn Loving becomes the ninth. His mastery of his craft, as well as his credentials, professional history and the support of the Schoolcraft faculty and staff made him a strong contender to receive his certification.

A Schoolcraft College instructor since 2002, Loving is also chair of the Culinary Arts Department. Formerly, he was owner of the popular Loving Spoonful restaurant in Farmington Hills.

Loving’s resume is impressive. He was the 2008 U.S. Summer Olympics Basketball Team chef and in-flight team chef for the Detroit Pistons. In 2002, he was the recipient of the Lawrence P. Doss Entrepreneur of the Year Award. Previously, he was chef for Epcot Center at Disney World and at Euro Disney. Loving is also a private personal chef for Nike Sport commercials via selected athletes. He’s a certified hospitality educator and culinary administrator and is executive chef for USA Basketball International, most recently travel-

To learn more about Schoolcraft College’s Culinary Program, visit schoolcraft.edu/cepd/culinary.

ing with the team to Rio de Janeiro for the 2016 Summer Olympics.

“This exam was the only thing I have ever done that allowed me to be in touch with all my weaknesses,” he said. “There were a lot of dark times and doubt but, at the end of the day, this was the most complete culinary journey I have ever been on in my life.”

Loving said the “market basket” portion of the exam caused him the most stress. “You are not sitting in front of your computer. You are just cooking from your heart,” he said. “I felt that that was my best opportunity to put my heart and soul into the food at the moment, my best opportunity for expression of freedom.”

SCHOOLCRAFT COLLEGE CULINARY ARTS PROGRAM

“Schoolcraft College shows a dedication to its culinary studies and the excellence it expects and puts forth,” Beland said. “They were willing to support a national project on site that required facilities that are above industry standards.”

According to Gabriel, the culinary program is “the school’s football team. We get a lot of priority. We get the best equipment and freshest ingredients, and we are education driven. Without the administration, we could never do anything like this.”

Decker appreciates that he and his colleagues are recognized as professionals in the eyes of the administration. “They have always made us feel that our endeavors are those of a professional discipline,” he said.

Loving added, “When you don’t have the level of support we enjoy at Schoolcraft, it is hard to create the magic that is necessary to prepare students for the industry.” **NS**