

MEDIA RELEASE

15 June 2021

Medal wins for NMIT cookery students

Lost ingredients, a race against time and live chef-to-chef cook-offs put two NMIT cookery students under pressure at the recent [Nestlé Golden Chef's Hat award](#) regional heats.

Billed as the 'ultimate culinary showdown' the competition provides a platform for emerging talent to compete against their peers, as well as to learn from leading industry experts.

For 23-year-old Sophie Olaman and Paige Keepa-Hutchinson, age 18, both first year Level 4 cookery students at NMIT, entering the competition was an opportunity of a life time, and taking home a bronze medal (equivalent of second place) was an important achievement for them.

"I followed the awards last year and I was keen to enter but I was a bit nervous, so I convinced Sophie to join me," says Paige.

"I agreed because it is good to push yourself, and it was a new experience for us," Sophie says.

The students had to present two mains and two desserts for the awards using a set list of ingredients.

Paige opted for leek wrapped, poached chicken stuffed with a mushroom duxelle, kumara mash, broccolini sauce and red wine jus. Her dessert was a white chocolate brûlée with poached rhubarb and citrus balls.

Sophie prepared a pan-fried chicken supreme stuffed with herb butter, leek risotto, blanched broccolini, crispy kale and red wine jus. A ginger and rhubarb tarte, with ginger mousse and caramelised white chocolate followed for dessert.

The students used practice sessions before the regional heats to iron out any issues with creating their dishes.

Paige found working out the right ratio of gelatine leaves needed for making her citrus balls a challenge, whereas Sophie was more concerned about not over cooking, or undercooking, her large piece of chicken breast.

Despite their nerves, and Sophie’s tray of ingredients going missing, both girls performed well at the event and would do it all again.

“I crushed it! It was the fastest I have ever worked—and I don’t think I’ve ever used as many dishes in my life. I was initially worried that my dessert didn’t have enough on the plate—but more would not have made it better. I learned a lot, especially that ‘simple is better’,” Paige says.

“It was stressful but it was worth it— and it will look good on our CVs,” Sophie says.

Apprentice and junior chefs, who are under 25 years, and currently employed or are enrolled as a culinary student are eligible to enter the competition.

Twelve regional finalists from Australia and New Zealand compete in Sydney in September, with one winner taking out the 2021 Golden Chef of the Year and a \$10k AUD cash prize.

Ends

PHOTO: NMIT students_Paige_Keepa-Hutchinson and Sophie_Olaman

CAPTION: NMIT students Paige Keepa-Hutchinson and Sophie Olaman won a bronze medal each at the 2021 Nestlé Golden Chef’s Hat Award regional cook-off.

Contact:

Jane Horder

Communications Advisor

Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology

Te Whare Wānanga o Te Tau Ihu o Te Waka a Maui

Private Bag 19, Nelson

DDI +64 3 539 5070 Mob: 027 801 2585

Go to nmit.ac.nz for the latest news, students stories and to sign up for our newsletter.