

HCC offers first time ever baking course

HOLYOKE – This fall, Holyoke Community College (HCC) will for the first time offer a stand-alone professional-level baking course open to anyone that wants to improve their baking skills.

The 14-week evening course, Baking and Pastry Arts I (Culinary 114), will run Mondays from 4:30-9:15 p.m. from Sept. 9 through Dec. 9, at the HCC MGM Culinary Arts Institute, 164 Race St.

The two-credit course, taught by HCC baking instructor, Maria Moreno Contreras, is exactly the same as the first of two baking courses required for students enrolled full time in HCC's Culinary Arts certificate and associate degree programs. For this new course, though, there are no prerequisites and students don't have to enroll in any other classes.

"Anybody can take this course," said Contreras, of Easthampton, a professional baker who previously worked at the Blue Heron Restaurant in Sunderland and operated her own local baking business, Chilean Sweets.

Students in Baking and Pastry Arts I will learn about ingredients, measurement techniques, culinary math, and nutrition as well as the steps required to make yeast breads, quick breads, cookies, cakes, cake decorations, laminated dough, pate a choux, custards, puddings and dessert sauces.

"It's a full-tilt professional baking course," said

Kristine Ricker-Choleva, interim dean of business.

Since the opening of the Culinary Arts Institute in 2018, HCC has received a lot of phone calls from people interested in taking baking classes but who might not have time to attend a comprehensive culinary school.

"This course is for anyone who wants to get a good base in baking fundamentals," she said. "It would also be appropriate for professionals working in the food industry who want to strengthen their baking skills or baking businesses, such as people who own food

trucks or small bakeries."

If this course is successful, HCC will offer Baking and Pastry Arts II in the spring 2020 semester for students who want to continue. Depending on demand, HCC might also add a full-time baking certificate program to its slate of culinary arts offerings.

"A lot of culinary schools have a baking track," she said.

The cost of the course is \$547. Seating is limited. To register, people may contact the HCC admissions office at 413-552-2321, Admissions@hcc.edu or apply online at hcc.edu/admissions.



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HCC baking instructor Maria Moreno Contreras of Easthampton in the baking kitchen at the HCC MGM Culinary Arts Institute.