

The Republican. PLUS



Chef Dino Diaz, of Springfield, will be teaching the gourmet cooking classes at the HCC MGM Culinary Arts Institute on Race Street.

HOLYOKE

Cook just like a chef

COINCIDING WITH THE opening of the new Holyoke Community College-MGM Culinary Arts Institute, the college will begin offering an evening series of gourmet cooking and baking classes in the facility's state-of-the-art teaching kitchens.

In each single-session, hands-on class, participants will learn how to prepare appetizers, salads, sauces, entrees and desserts under the guidance of professional chefs. Not only will they dine on their creations, they will also leave with the knowledge and confidence they need to replicate those recipes at home.

The first gourmet cooking class, "Italian Classics: Back to Naples," will

be on Feb. 9 from 6 to 9 p.m., followed by the inaugural baking class, "Valentine's Day Romance: Love and Chocolate," on Feb. 13, from 5:30 to 9 p.m.

These and all future classes will be held at the college's new, downtown culinary arts education and training center at 164 Race St.

"The college is very excited about bringing these types of culinary experiences to the Pioneer Valley," said Ken White, dean of community services. "It's an evening out for entertainment and education. It's meant to be fun."

The gourmet cooking series grew from cooking classes offered on campus during the past few years as part of the college's summer youth

programs for teens and pre-teens.

Those classes were taught by Domingo "Dino" Diaz Jr., of Springfield, a professional chef, adjunct faculty member and a 2012 graduate of HCC's culinary arts program.

On each day of those summer sessions, "Chef Dino" focused on a different kind of cuisine and stressed cooking basics with an upscale, fine-dining focus.

"The parents were so crazy about the food he was having their kids prepare they asked if we would ever consider running classes like that for adults," White said. "We said, yes, if we ever had the opportunity, and the new facility on Race Street now pro-

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vides us the perfect opportunity.”

The culinary arts institute officially opened this week with the start of the spring semester. Diaz, for one, is excited about the vast, second floor space where he'll be conducting his classes.

“The layout will give students the true feeling of working in a restaurant kitchen,” he said.

Diaz designed and will teach the “Dine Out with Chef Dino” gourmet cooking classes. The menus each night are a mix of his personal recipes and those he likes from other sources.

In the “Back to Naples” class, for instance, he will teach participants how to prepare a five-course classic Italian meal from scratch, including handmade fettuccini, slow-cooked Italian meat sauce, chicken parmigiana, sautéed broccoli rabe, Sicilian salad and ricotta-filled cannoli with dark minced chocolate.

Classes are limited to 12 people, and they work in teams of two.

“Unlike similar types of programs where each team works on different dishes, what separates ours from others is that everybody in the class gets to create, prepare and produce every item they're going to be consuming that night,” White said.

And the classes are not just about cooking. Participants will also learn about picking produce and buying locally sourced ingredients, using non-GMO ingredients, how to elegantly plate their dishes, pairing sides,

pairing wines, and preparing meals for people with dietary restrictions.

“It's really a full night of learning what it's like to create a visually appealing, healthy, fine-dining experience,” White said.

The baking classes will be taught Maria Contreras, the baking instructor in HCC's culinary arts program. In her Feb. 13 Valentine's Day Romance class, participants will learn how to make a flourless chocolate ganache tort and chocolate mousse.

Classes in the gourmet cooking series cost \$79 each. Baking classes are \$59 each.

Other spring semester classes include:

- “Beef Bourguignon: A French Classic,” with Chef Dino, March 8, 6-9 p.m. (beef bourguignon, baby carrots, pearl onions and button mushrooms; whipped potatoes; supreme salad with maple apple vinaigrette; chocolate soufflé);

- “Salmon Three Ways,” with Chef Dino, April 5, 6-9 p.m. (salmon with homemade pesto, salmon with citrus soy glaze, blackened salmon, risotto a la Milanese with baby asparagus, New York style lemon cheese-cake);

- “Croquebouche: A Celebration of That Someone Special or Special Occasion,” with Chef Contreras, April 17, 5:30-9 p.m.; and

- “Show Stopper Starters (appetizers),” with Chef Dino, May 11, 6-9 p.m. (seared scallops, stuffed mushrooms tenderloin crostini, artichoke hearts a la francaise).

For more information or to register for classes, go online to hcc.edu/bce or call 413-552-2500.