



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** June 25, 2025

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## **Bonita Unified Student Chefs Win Grand Prize, Bring Food Truck Concept to Life at EcoLab Spotlight**

**SAN DIMAS/LA VERNE** – Two Bonita High School ProStart culinary students looking to flip the script on breakfast menus and transform the meal into an Instagram-worthy food truck experience were named co-grand prize winners at the EcoLab Sunday Night Spotlight “Bites & Beats” competition, which challenged students from across the U.S. to develop unique takes on food truck cuisine and marketing.

Bonita High Class of 2025 graduate Charli Padilla and rising junior Abby Brandler won for their food truck concept, “The Flip Side,” a mobile restaurant with two separate menus for day and night, serving tasty twists on classic American breakfast staples paired with bold new breakfast-themed delights created by Padilla and Brandler.

Padilla and Brandler envision “The Flip Side” as a way to remake breakfast to satisfy the tastes and preferences of today’s on-the-go consumers, as detailed in the pair’s video submission. “The Flip Side” was one of two food trucks featured as part of the National Restaurant Association’s annual industry gala, held in Chicago in May, allowing Padilla and Brandler to put their vision to the test.

“I am in absolute disbelief. Out of everyone in the entire nation, the company selected our video,” Padilla said. “I didn’t expect to win. This was our first time working together. I entered thinking the competition is tough and this is a solid once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. It’s not every day you get to build a food truck with your best friend. I am eternally grateful to EcoLab and our ProStart instructors, the Brandlers, for making this possible.”

Padilla and Brandler sought to recast breakfast from predictable to sumptuous, with entrees like pancake tacos stacked with bacon, eggs, and avocado; a fresh fruit and brown butter combo; and their signature dish, the Toasted Temptation – fresh toast bites served in a cone, drizzled in chocolate, topped with bananas foster sauce, chai whipped cream, pecans, and banana chips.

“The Flip Side” is also noteworthy for marketing to two different consumer types: early birds who want a quick breakfast to kick start their day, and night owls looking for something a little more exciting. With two separate shifts – 7 a.m. to noon and 6 to 11 p.m. – Padilla and Brandler expand the menus to accommodate their sweet and savory breakfast ideas while satisfying a variety of tastes.

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Padilla and Brandler learned they had been selected for the EcoLab Spotlight event at the 2025 ProStart National Invitational, and the pair immediately connected with EcoLab designers to help bring “The Flip Side” to life. Brightly lit in orange and yellow with blue and white stripes, the food truck has a retro ’70s feel, complete with an animated mascot, Sunny the Dog, preparing to take a bite out of a waffle cone.

“I think we make a great team,” Brandler said. “Charli is very driven when it comes to back of the house and I’m knowledgeable on the front of the house, management side. This concept was fully our vision from every idea and detail. The truck reflects who we are, what we’re passionate about, and what we’re capable of doing. To see this concept come to life on a national stage is a dream come true.”

The EcoLab recognition completes a historic year for the Bonita Unified ProStart Culinary program. San Dimas High School’s culinary team earned its [first national championship](#) at the ProStart National Invitational in May, one year after Bonita High School, led by team captain Padilla, netted the District its first ProStart state culinary championship and trip to nationals.

For husband-and-wife ProStart culinary instructors Nick and Laurie Brandler, who teach at San Dimas and Bonita high schools, respectively, the food truck competition was a personal triumph and an opportunity to support their daughter, Abby, as she and Padilla brought “The Flip Side” to life during their Sunday Night Spotlight food truck soft opening.

“I am so incredibly proud of Charli and Abby, not only in showcasing what ProStart has done for them, but for having the insight to know that this industry experience sets them far ahead of their peers,” Laurie Brandler said. “They got to experience the biggest culinary industry event of the year and represent ProStart on a national scale to the best minds in the industry, from CEOs to executive chefs.”

### PHOTOS:

**BUSD\_ECOLAB1:** Bonita High School Class of 2025 graduate Charli Padilla (right) and rising junior Abby Brandler (left) celebrate the creation of their food truck “The Flip Side” at the EcoLab Sunday Night Spotlight “Bites & Beats” showcase in May. The pair were one of two culinary teams in the U.S. to have their food trucks featured as part of the National Restaurant Association’s annual industry gala.

**BUSD\_ECOLAB2:** Bonita High School Class of 2025 graduate Charli Padilla (right) and rising junior Abby Brandler (left) pose in front of their food truck concept “The Flip Side” during a National Restaurant Association gala in May. “The Flip Side” is a food truck that looks to flip the script on breakfast menus and transform the meal into an Instagram-worthy dining experience.

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