



BONITA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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NEWS RELEASE

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San Dimas High Culinary Team Excels at National Competition for Second Straight Year

SAN DIMAS/LA VERNE – San Dimas High School’s ProStart culinary team continued to make history while establishing itself as one of the top culinary schools in the United States after earning a fourth-place finish at the 2026 National ProStart Invitational, held in Baltimore in the spring. The competition brings together top student chefs from around the country, whose culinary creations are judged by a panel of professionals and industry leaders.

San Dimas High, the reigning 2025 National ProStart Invitational culinary champion, received the opportunity to defend its title after becoming the first back-to-back California ProStart Cup champions since 2011 – the last year a school from California finished in the national top 10. Now, San Dimas High, representing all of California, has finished in the top four nationwide in consecutive years.

Including Bonita High School, which advanced to the Nationals in 2024 and earned a 10th-place finish, Bonita Unified culinary teams have finished in the national top 10 three years in a row. Additionally, San Dimas High’s ProStart management team earned a third-place finish at the Nationals in 2023, giving the District representation at the National ProStart Invitational for four straight years.

“I can’t say enough about our culinary kids. They know it’s going to be hard work, but they come out every night to prepare for competition and to bond with each other,” San Dimas High ProStart culinary teacher Nick Brandler said. “They aren’t just talented; they are eager to learn. They know we have high expectations, and they are all in for the challenge. I am so proud of what they have accomplished. They truly are a special group.”

Led by San Dimas High Class of 2026 graduate Kyle Yamate, the culinary team – including Yamate, Class of 2026 graduates Salvador Renteria and Julian Rozier, rising senior Alexa Aguilera, and rising junior Gabriella Carranza – served up a fine dining menu consisting of a Hamachi, salmon and tuna crudo starter; duck breast and truffle risotto entrée; and banana Bavarian and pineapple compote dessert.

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“Going to Nationals again this year was a different experience,” Yamate said. “Since I was captain, I felt it was more challenging, but also more rewarding, for I was able to see the growth of my teammates throughout the whole competition season. I am so proud of my teammates and what we have achieved this year. Thank you to Mr. Brandler for making my senior year so much fun.”

Each member of the San Dimas culinary team received a scholarship from the National Restaurant Foundation (NRF). Yamate plans to continue his culinary education at Cal Poly Pomona’s Collins College of Hospitality.

Bonita Unified’s ProStart culinary pathway, now in its 20th year, commenced in 2006 when Bonita High culinary teacher Laurie Brandler began teaching ProStart curriculum at Bonita and Chaparral-Vista high schools. Nick Brandler began teaching ProStart full-time at San Dimas in 2016. Led by the husband-and-wife team, the two schools, far from being rivals, work together and cheer on the success of the other.

Since partnering with the California Restaurant Foundation (CRF), which provided the Brandlers with resources and administers the ProStart state competition, Bonita Unified has started a legacy, with both high schools quickly establishing themselves as regional favorites, progressing steadily in competition, before the District’s national breakthrough year in 2023.

“Schools all over California and the United States know how strong Bonita Unified’s ProStart program is, and some of the top schools have admitted to me they are trying to incorporate our style,” Nick Brandler said. “This is the ultimate compliment, and shows just how much we’ve grown as a program, and how much our student chefs have influenced the competition, on both a state and national level.”

PHOTOS:

BUSD_2026_NATIONALS1: San Dimas High School’s ProStart culinary team celebrates after their fourth-place finish at the 2026 National ProStart Invitational, held in Baltimore in April. Led by team captain, Class of 2026 graduate Kyle Yamate, San Dimas High, which won the nationals in 2025, finished in the top four for the second consecutive year.

BUSD_2026_NATIONALS2: San Dimas High School rising senior Alexa Aguilera puts the finishing touches on a dish during the 2026 National ProStart Invitational, held in Baltimore in April. San Dimas High, the reigning National ProStart champions from 2025, finished in fourth-place.

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