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Baldwin Park Unified Culinary Student Serves Community Favorites

BALDWIN PARK – Joel Diaz, a Baldwin Park Adult and Community Education (BPACE) student known for his culinary skills and creativity, has made history for crafting a barbecue chicken salad that pulled in record-breaking sales at two cafés run by the culinary program.

Diaz and his classmates sold 65 lunch specials and earned \$590, the highest revenue in one day at the Main Street and District cafés since opening in 1991.

“It was amazing and exciting to sell the most specials,” said Diaz, a student in special education. “I was talking with Chef Brandon and he talked me into doing the salad for my lunch special.”

Inspired by a dish from his favorite restaurant, Diaz made the ranch dressing from scratch and learned how to smoke the chicken.

“It’s going to be tough to set a new record,” Diaz said.

Sixteen years in BPACE’s culinary arts academy, Diaz enjoys every aspect of his job from cooking alongside his classmates to cleaning out the soda machine. However, the element he enjoys most is interacting with the BPUSD community and making people feel welcomed.

“Joel is a kind-hearted person, who is loved by everyone who meets him,” BPACE Instructor and Chef Brandon Palmer said. “He has this positive spirit that puts a smile on your face, even on your bad days.”

In BPACE’s culinary program, students master kitchen techniques and entrepreneurial skills while nurturing a deep passion for the culinary arts.

“I want to thank both my parents, Chef Palmer and the other instructors for the opportunity to be here,” Diaz said.

The culinary academy is among eight pathways available to students through BPACE. This program features culinary foundations where students learn food safety and sanitation, advanced culinary and international cuisines, restaurant skills and management.

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For more information on BPACE's culinary arts academy, contact Chef Jeff Palmer at 626.939.4300 or at jwpalmer166@bpusd.net.

PHOTO:

CULINARY_DIAZ: Student Joel Diaz (left) and BPACE's Chef Brandon Palmer (right) create expertly designed and healthy dishes as part of Baldwin Park's Adult and Community Education's culinary arts academy.

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