

## **Michigan State University Chefs Share Their Expertise with Students**

By Harley Cook, Student Communications Assistant, MSU Culinary Services

For many college students, there is a looming thought about what life skills they need to know once they leave the comfort of their own home and head to campus. Lucky for students at Michigan State University (MSU), the Office of Spartan Experiences has a program called “Backpacks to Briefcases,” where students learn necessary life skills such as managing money, building wealth, buying food economically, and cooking.

The program started back in 2019 when faculty members from the Office of Spartan Experiences noticed “there was a need to provide transitional workshops and seminars for particularly graduating seniors who needed information,” according to Tammye Coles, the Student Life Manager for the office. From there, a series of online video workshops were created where faculty and students on campus showed the requested skills that students wanted to learn.

One of the most popular workshops is a series titled “Cooking with the Pros,” where students learn how to cook with university chefs through online video tutorials and Facebook Live events. The series started when former Corporate Executive Chef Kurt Kwiatkowski collaborated with the student life team to share this expertise. The series focused on primary cooking skills at first such as making chicken and pasta. However, as the program grew, the complexity of the recipes and skills grew into making Mardi Gras-themed cuisine, creating multiple meals for the week with chicken, and developing themed meals for sports tournaments and friend get-togethers.

In the most recent installment of the series, Sous Chef Samuel Parsons from Heritage Commons at Landon showed students from the Office of Spartan Experiences, as well as an audience of more than 400 Facebook users how to make Mochi Donuts, Otaku Sliders, and Japanese Coleslaw. He used simple ingredients that anyone can find at a grocery store and made all three recipes in under an hour. The students trying the dishes at the end of the session had great reviews and shared how simple the recipes were. Tammye Coles states that, “the way that the chefs present the information to [students]...[makes it] more at their level...more fun and more engaging”.

Although the latest Cooking with the Pros installment was the last one for the 2023-24 academic year, the Office of Spartan Experiences plans to continue the series, hoping that more students will view the workshop videos and be inspired to cook like and with the pros.

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