

## Tried-and-true Treats

# Caramel Ghirardelli overpowers mint Oreo in cooking contest

By Adam Crozier

Nutrition and Wellness' 'Cooking with a Mix' third annual semester challenge took place on Feb. 28, involving almost 100 students among three classes facing off to finesse pre-packaged food mixes with a creative twist.



**Camille Johnson**

"I want students to understand not all cooking has to be done from scratch," said **Michelle Burris**, nutrition and wellness teacher. "We have a lot of convenience food. I want them to see how that can benefit them, but also how that can elevate it."

Freshmen chefs **Shaelynn Gardner**, **Kaitlyn Gornik** and **Camille Johnson**, with team members sophomore **Jose Alonso** and freshman **Chase Gehring**, took the cake with salted caramel chocolate Ghirardelli cookies, winning the sixth period contest. Burris said the Ghirardellis were the best-tasting of the competitors, and guest judges were in unanimous agreement of the top spot.

Johnson declared her group the winner before judging even started. "It's basic," she said, "but it's something amazing. Who doesn't like salted caramel and chocolate? That's fire." She also has a catchphrase: "watemelons" (wōdər, melōns). She says this whenever something goes her way.

However, her teammates showed less confidence.

"When I started mixing it together I thought, 'Oh, shoot.' This does not look right," said Gardner.

She felt better after instructional aide **Devin Sloan**, who was meandering between student stations, said, "I don't like chocolate, but that does look good."

Still, Gardner sized up the competition, and her eyes seized upon a trifle, which combined chopped-up brownies and mint Oreos, layered between homemade cream cheese drizzled with choc-

olate. This was the creation of freshmen **Pamela Ramirez** and **Megan Hurst**, a 4-H club member with baking contest experience.

"Their presentation was on point," Gardner said, adding she thought it would win.

The competition began with six teams racing to solve a puzzle. They had to double the amount of different ingredients in a list. Each answer corresponded to part of a code. The first group to crack the code received first pick of an extra ingredient — maple syrup, mint Oreos, marshmallows, pecans, raisins or chocolate chips. The victorious five solved the riddle second, picking chocolate chips to make their cookies pop.

Economics teachers **Adam Spieth** and **Sarah Wintin-Guthrie**, and assistant principal **Sarah Brewer** judged the competition, along with the reporter of this article. Assistant principal **Kevin Albright** sat next to Brewer and sampled the entries as a guest. Brewer said one of the entries reminded her of a Hard-ee's breakfast.

The baking teams, numbered one through six, presented their treats to us, the judges, with each group explaining how they made their dessert. To make cleanup easier, Burris used paper plates to serve.

We rated each treat based on presentation, taste and creativity, deliberating on the rank of the top three overall.

"The Ghirardellis were my favorite," **Spieth** said. "I couldn't eat all of it. I would've liked to eat more, but I couldn't. It was just too sweet."

Other creations, reminiscent of Food Network's "Chopped":

— Junior **Alejandra Lopez** and senior **Alex Cadwell's** group made chocolate cookies with marshmallows, hot fudge and sprinkles.

— Sophomore **Lillian Gordon** compiled Pillsbury Grands dough, pecans, butter, brown sugar, sugar and corn syrup to produce caramel sticky buns.

— Freshman **Trinity Coates'** team topped spice cupcakes with maple syrup infused whipped cream sprinkled with cinnamon.

— Freshman **Kal-EI Hendrickson**



Sophomore Megan Hurst opens a bag of cream cheese for her mint Oreo trifles. She strikes a thumbs-up pose and smiles into the camera, optimistic of the judges' scores (Photo by Adam Crozier).

with the rest of Group No. 6 turned Biscoquick into "glazed raisin-cinnamon biscuits."

At the end, Gardner's team eked out the victory with the girls baking almost the whole period.

"I think starting the next time we'll have the guys cook and that will be a disaster," she said, laughing.

To be fair, Gardner has a memento of her own cooking bloopers. In fifth grade, she set out to bake a cake. "I put it on the bottom rack instead of the top." This caused the cake to heat up quicker and turn out burnt.

She took it in stride: "I learn more about kitchen safety when I fail."

Now, she's more experienced and



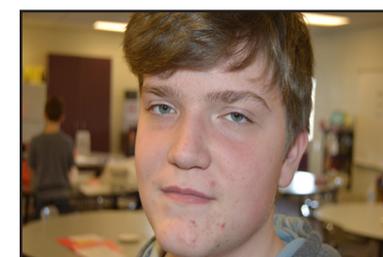
**Alejandra Lopez**

knows her way around a kitchen.

The 14 year-old said she'll be more prepared when it's time to be responsible for making her own meals.

"A lot of people think they'll be fine when they go to college," Gardner said.

"My grandma takes me to the store and we'll buy a bunch of junk food. Then my mom will make something nutritious and full of protein and that will make me feel better."



**Luke Lowery**