



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2021.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).


PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: County of Henrico
Program Title: Local Restaurant, Culinary Students Cook Up Opportunities
Program Category: Community and Economic Development

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

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Title: Deputy County Manager for Administration
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Program Overview

The students in Henrico County Public Schools' culinary arts program at Varina High School teamed up with a local business, Smoke Pit Grill, affording students the opportunity to learn firsthand from professionals in the field the proper techniques and tips for smoking meats. The owners of Smoke Pit Grill brought in their own smoking equipment and tools and worked with students on how to prepare smoked meats. This opportunity was unique for our students because it delved outside of the standard curriculum and more into a specialty area.

The owners of the Smoke Pit Grill had a chance to work with students who are interested in the culinary profession and gave the owners an opportunity to interact, make connections and even look at potential employees for the future.

Problem/Challenge/Situation Faced by Locality

The culinary curriculum in Virginia has a generalized focus in the area of food preparation. The problem is that our culinary students do not have the opportunity to work with a professional team versed in smoking meats. It is a rare opportunity for our students and produced a collaborative effort that was beneficial to all involved. HCPS already had a great business partnership with Smoke Pit Grill, and this enhanced that partnership even more.

How Program Fulfilled Awards Criteria

This particular project is worthy of an award based on the collaborative effort of a local school system and local business both working for a common cause. The partnership and willingness of a restaurant owner to give his time and efforts to help high school students is commendable. Our students received great benefit from this program by adding a speciality area to their knowledge of food preparation and learning first hand about the running of a restaurant and operation of a food truck. They also experienced the value of business partnerships and appreciated the

willingness of a community business owner to take time to work with them and take interest in their learning.

How Program Was Carried Out

Culinary arts is an elective program offered within high schools and Advanced Career Education Centers in Henrico County Public Schools. Varina High School has an award-winning culinary program with deep traditions and is known as one of the strongest programs in the area. The culinary program is generalized in nature, with students learning a vast array of information in their curriculum. Specialization areas are not generally included.

The school division formed a relationship with the Smoke Pit Grill in 2018 as one of our business partners, and its geographical location is less than a quarter of a mile from two of our schools. When the Smoke Pit Grill owners heard about our culinary program at Varina, they were eager to come in and work with the students. The culinary arts instructor at Varina was extremely excited to have Smoke Pit Grill come in and work with her students on the art of smoking meats. This was a rare opportunity for our culinary students to venture into a specialized area.

The students' objectives were to learn about the art of smoking meats and interact with professionals in the field. The owners of the Smoke Pit Grill worked with the students from the beginning to the end of the smoking process. This started with the selection of meats and included all of the preparation procedures (such as basting and seasoning) before ultimately placing the meats on the smoker and creating the finished product.

Part of Smoke Pit Grill's business is running a food truck. One of the owners talked with students about food trucks and the entrepreneurship opportunities within the culinary industry. Students

had the opportunity to “run” the food truck and experience what it was like to actually operate such a business.

This project was completed within a day, but the relationships built from this experience will be long-lasting for both the students and the Smoke Pit Grill owners.

Financing and Staffing

Smoke Pit Grill volunteered their services, time and supplies to Henrico County Public Schools and therefore, there was no cost involved in this project.

Program Results

“Local Restaurant, Culinary Students Cook Up Opportunities” was a very successful program for all parties involved. Smoke Pit Grill had the opportunity to train and work with high school students who have a love for the culinary profession. In addition, they were able to showcase their expertise and work with students on their specialty area of smoking meats.

The students certainly benefited from this program as well. They had a chance to explore outside of their standard culinary class and learn more about the art of smoking meats. This is not something they would have been afforded the opportunity to do within their own class. The culinary classroom does not have the equipment necessary to do smoked meats, and it is not something that is covered in their curriculum. Most importantly, students had the chance to learn directly from professionals in the field and interact with them. Conversations took place about the culinary industry, the company’s food truck business and business ownership, further enhancing the student’s experience and knowledge.

Brief Summary

The culinary curriculum in Virginia has a generalized focus in the area of food preparation. However, there are many speciality areas of food preparation that go beyond the curriculum, requiring specific expertise and equipment. Students in the culinary arts program at Varina High School had not previously had an opportunity to learn about smoking meats. As HCPS already had a business partnership with Smoke Pit Grill, the restaurant staff and teachers teamed up to provide this experience for the Varina students.

This collaboration afforded students the opportunity to learn firsthand from professionals in the field the proper techniques and tips for smoking meats. The owners of Smoke Pit Grill brought in their own smoking equipment and tools and worked with students on how to prepare smoked meats. The students benefited greatly from this unique experience, adding to their knowledge of food preparation and strengthening the partnership between HCPS and Smoke Pit Grill.

Local Restaurant, Culinary Students Cook Up Opportunities

Supplemental Material

