

# CPS Café - Exciting Culinary Adventure

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People walking near the CPS Café are enticed by the lingering aromas rising from the homemade recipes served there. Fresh and local organic products that are hand-mixed with a wide array of spices result in diverse flavor temptations.

Many have found it difficult to pass without stopping in the CPS Café.

Just who are the food magicians that have captivated their customers' senses and how do they create the mouthwatering combinations that are hard to find elsewhere in central Wisconsin?

The CPS Café manager, Kim Beckham, leads a host of UWSP students in that culinary challenge. The cafe is located in the College of Professional Studies building on the UWSP campus. Some of those students attend classes in food related degree fields while others are employees hand-picked by Beckham.

Hannah Brillowski is a May 2009 graduate in dietetics and has worked the last three years in the cafe. The experience will be important in the attainment of her career goals, reported Brillowski.

"It has been fun as well as a great opportunity to be trained by Kim," said Brillowski. "I have experienced the culinary aspects as well as food service and the sense of community that comes from working here. I am using this to prepare for participation in an internship and to help me pass the registered dietetics exam."

Many student customers have come to enjoy eating the cafe vegetables, reported Brillowski. This may come as a shock to other UWSP students.

"Some customers ask for a kind of vegetable such as Brussels sprouts," said Brillowski. "They like the different ways that Kim prepares them. She has gotten creative with the sides for vegetables. She makes them taste more likeable."



One of the latest sustainable and organic options the cafe has created is the made-from-scratch condiments. This can be a difficult task, reported Emily Barszcz, a UWSP junior and a cafe food service worker.

"The first time I was told to make a condiment, I thought I had ruined it," said Barszcz. "It was mayo and it was awful! I stood there almost in tears when Kim came over and salvaged it. That was when I

learned that almost every situation in life has hope."

The cafe has come to be known for its use of available local produce in its menu plan. This has resulted in having to serve the same vegetable for an extended time period during a semester. The last one was kale, reported Beckham.

"We had to push the envelope and expand the ways to use kale," said Beckham. "I was able to create a recipe using sweet potato with kale. I also did some things with kale and ginger. The sweet potato and kale recipe became a favorite for 2009."

Spices have played a large part in Beckham's creativity. Her varied background includes experience with spices from the American Deep South and northern East Coast, those from the Tidewater cooking style that include Creole from New Orleans and many Welch recipes from her family heritage.

“If you ask me, I’ll try very hard to get it,” said Beckham. “The use of spices in the food here has to match the local taste. It is more of an evolution in process. After trying a wide variety of spice levels, I have settled on what I see sells to the crowds who come here to eat.”

Some customers have suggested ideas to the student employees serving them. One request was for apple cookies while others have asked for something they liked from past cafe offerings, reported Barszcz.

Beckham devised a plan to deal with any request for something new. The steps in it are simple. She will make it.

This new recipe process can be quite intensive. The creation of a recipe requires an ability to combine color, aroma, and a proper combination of flavor, reported Beckham.

“It is like, to use an analogy, writing music,” said Beckham. “In this case, I use a flavor profile along with food textures combined with my experience to create it. It is a learned behavior where I am willing to take the risk necessary to get it right.”

The student workers had many great things to say about their manager. When asked to describe Beckham, they easily came to an agreement. It was the same thing that Beckham had agreed with earlier.

“Kim is like a kid in a candy store,” said Barszcz. “She is creative with a special talent to teach. Working in the cafe builds pride in my work, fast food places don’t. When I had to work alone, it built my basic confidence and enhanced my problem solving. These are usable outside the cafe.”



The cafe has gained a wide customer base. Staff, faculty and students have come from all over the campus to get their fill. Also, an afternoon cookie and coffee crowd has flowed in and out in small groups.

Faculty cookie and coffee crowd customers expressed their desire to spend time in the open cafe atmosphere. They also mentioned how the cafe’s aroma added flavor to conducting interviews in the nearby faculty lounge.

Beckham provided her thoughts on the main goal of the CPS Café.

“The CPS Café operates as a food service open to the public for the purpose of giving dietetic students experience in all areas of food service operation and management,” said Beckham. “We try to have a diverse selection to meet the tastes of all customers who walk into our cafe.”