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## Local fundraiser a winner for fans of good cuisine

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For those of you that like high-class cuisine, a local fundraiser this week may be able to fill your taste buds.

The 13th annual Bite of the Arts gala is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. Friday in the Cotillion Ballroom on the campus of Nicholls State University in Thibodaux.

The annual event is entitled "La Fete de Lyon: Celebrating Chef Paul Bocuse and His World Class Cuisine." Approximately 300 Nicholls' culinary students will showcase their skills, beginning with a cocktail and hors d'oeuvres reception and ending in a three-course gourmet dinner, including a dessert buffet.



Nicholls State University culinary students Sean Poole (left) and Austin Oliver carve up a jambalaya-stuffed roast pig at last year's Bite of the Arts at Cypress Columns in Gray.

"Attending the John Folse Culinary Institute is a good opportunity to work in the real world," said Derek Prough, a senior from St. Martinville. "Each student at the Culinary Institute of America and at the Johnson and Wells institutes has everything provided to them, whereas we have to learn to share equipment and space and to work together."

The gala benefits the Chef John Folse Culinary Institute at Nicholls. Visiting chef, Patrick Ogheard of the Institut Paul Bocuse, just outside Lyon, France, created the menu and will be in Thibodaux to consult with the local students.

"This is my fourth time to work on Bite of the Arts," Prough said. "I haven't had the opportunity to study at the Institut Paul Bocuse, but now I will have an opportunity for an alliance with Patrick."

Money raised from the event pays for four \$500 and four \$1,000 Bite of the Arts scholarships, as well as the purchase of equipment and expenses for attending conferences and continuing education.

"The John Folse Culinary Institute is the sole American partner in the Institut Paul Bocuse Worldwide Alliance," Chef John Folse said on the institute's Web site. "Our alliance with the Institut Paul Bocuse in Lyon, France, provides some of our students with the best hands-on training in French cuisine possible."

While Randy Cheramie, associate dean of the John Folse Culinary Institute, and Marcelle Bienvenu, an instructor in the program, is organizing the event, they said it's the local students who are the event's stars.

Prough, the Chef de Cuisine — a position chosen by the faculty from student nominees — is just one local student who will be showcasing his skills at the Friday event. The position is based on experience, grades and proven leadership ability.

Prough is working his senior externship at Restaurant August, a restaurant owned by Chef John Besh which was named as one of the 50 best restaurants in the U.S. in 2006 by Gourmet Magazine.

Prough said with four sampling stations at the reception, in addition to drink stations and the preparation of dinner for an anticipated 350 guests, there is plenty of work to go around.

"The faculty is here to help as much as we can," Bienvenu added.

Along with the food, which is the highlight of the evening, there will be live and silent auctions.

University officials said the John Folse Culinary Institute is a respected training school for chefs and was the first four-year culinary-degree program offered at a public university in the U.S.

"There is a warmth that I find in a lot of the graduates that come from John Folse," Besh said on a video on the Nicholls' Web site.

Tickets cost \$5,000 for a table for ten or \$150 per guest. For tickets, call 449-7114.

"I'm proud of that school," said Chef Leah Chase, owner of Dooky Chase Restaurant and a visiting professor at the John Folse Culinary Institute. "It teaches all of the cultures of this state, and we are many cultures."

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