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Andrews flight attendants receive corporate level etiquette training *By Bobby Jones*

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Since the Executive Airlift Training Center (EATC) opened its doors in 2005, EATC instructors have constantly researched for ways to increase culinary skills of their students and make it cost effective for the Air Force.

Recently, the instructors were able to elevate the school's training curriculum by providing students with an advanced, corporate-level, three-day culinary course here Dec. 7-9. The course was sponsored by The Corporate School of Etiquette, Long Beach, Ca.

"The purpose of this course is to teach culinary skills with class utilization of the product, as well as rolling over the product to save waste on board the aircraft," said Donna Casacchia, Corporate School of Etiquette president.

The advanced culinary class incorporated 75 menus selected by Tech. Sgt. Khristine Farmer, 1st Airlift Squadron assistant flight chief, and flight attendant evaluator for the C-32A and C-40B aircraft.

Farmer selected recipes from the menus to fit the customer clientele and work space on both small and large jets.

"I feel very privileged to be on Andrews with all of the squadrons," said Casacchia.

"The students will learn confidence and self-esteem; which is what this career field is all about. This course will also teach them professionalism and business etiquette."

Students who received their basic culinary training at the Basic Flight Attendant Course at the Center of Excellence at Lackland Air Force Base, Tx., also learned upgraded service skills such as cooking, plating, knife skills and different ways of cooking main entrée.

However, students benefitted most from the culinary experience of Melissa Bigelow, Hollywood executive chef to the stars.

"It's a pleasure to be on Andrews," said Bigelow, who has provided services for such stars as Tom Cruise, Will and Jada Smith, Mick Jagger, the Rolling Stones, Jack Black, Madonna, Britney Spears and many others.

Bigelow, who currently serves as the Venetian Hotel director of catering for the aviation division in Las Vegas, educated the students on how to prepare quick, nutritional meals, keeping consumer cost in mind.

"I like to cook with the seasons when things are the freshest. They're at their best when they are in season and it's the most cost effective," said Bigelow, referring to butternut squash that would be used for a Moroccan Squash winter soup.

One of EATC former resident instructors gave the overall course her stamp of approval for quality and cost effective techniques.

"In the current time of budget cuts, this training is saving the Air Force thousands of dollars," said Tech. Sgt. Leah Sitzes, 89th Operations Group flight attendant evaluator for the C-20, C-37A and C-37B aircraft. "First of all, we provide in-house training for our students who are already stationed here so we don't have to send them anywhere to get the training. Plus, they are exposed to cutting edge recipes and techniques at a low cost. Lastly, when we bring in a chef, they bring recipes that not only save money but, they're time-effective and geared storage wise for a particular aircraft."

The squadron flight attendants who participated in the course included members from the Presidential Airlift Squadron, 1st Airlift Squadron, 99th Airlift Squadron and the 201st Airlift Squadron.

"I'm a big fan of this course," said Farmer. "I've taken this course before and I've been using these skills ever since I learned them. We've been working a long time to get this corporate school involved with the Air Force on a more regular basis. It's not just your normal chef coming here to show us how to cook. She provides us feedback like what could work on your aircraft versus a chef who's not familiar with the challenges that flight attendants face in the aviation community. For some of the flight attendants it's been awhile for them since they've been to the basic course. So it's a good refresher tailored to reinforce specific culinary skills they may be lacking. It will get their creative juices flowing again."

For one flight attendant, the course exceeded her expectations and fueled future entrepreneur aspirations.

"I'm a brand new flight attendant," said Tech. Sgt. Erica Fowler, 99th Airlift Squadron, who became a flight attendant in January 2010. "I've only been flying since July 2011, so this course is very valuable to me. These recipes and ideas that we can take to the jets are customized for the jet," said Fowler. "They're the type of items that our distinguished visitors would like to see on the menu and prepared for them. I'm grateful this course is giving us the skills to do that."

Looking in retrospect of her previous background in services within the 7th Force Support Squadron, Dyess Air Force Base, Abilene, Tx., Fowler relished what opportunities the newly-upgraded skills would present.

"This course is definitely helping to polish up the basics that I've already acquired," said Fowler. "I'm very excited to be here. When I finish the rest of my career as a flight attendant, or retire, my dream is to own a bed and breakfast. So, all of this training is going to culminate in the end."