



HCSA January Member Spotlight:

Maite Palma Rodriguez

1. What is your major? How long have you been active with HCSA?

My major is Hotel and Restaurant Management. I have been active with HCSA for almost two years.

2. As the former publicity and marketing, what was the most enjoyable part of being an officer? How about the most challenging part? The most enjoyable part was the challenge of being an officer, and the opportunity to work with so many different people. The most challenging part was having the time to do everything I wanted to do. I wish I would be able to do more for the organization.

3. We heard that you joined Chef's under Fire last Fall, give us a brief overview of the competition. Yes! I did. Was great. Was an event where three recognized Chef from the area place each one a recipe, so the participants will create their own version. Everyone submitted their recipes versions and every Chef choose three finalists to compete live the day of the event. I was honor and lucky enough to be one of the finalists for Chef Ken Rathbun from Jasper with my own version of his grill pork tenderloin in a peach barbecue sauce. I made a Mango barbecue Sauce version.

4. How did you hear about this event? The school received the information and Chef Michelle Brown send it to me giving the fact that I was in Austin, were the event took place.

5. Where there any qualifications that you had to meet prior to the competition? Not at all, they were looking culinary students, or anyone related to the food business, but there were even one finalist that was just a foodie.

6. Was there any prices involved, or was it simply to see who is the best? Yes, there were prices. Items from some of the event sponsors, like the gel mat, and so many others, so every one put something on the final price basket. Discount tickets, samples, etc. Beside that, every participant received as a trophy an medium aluminum kitchen pot.

7. Why did you decide to take part of Chef's under Fire? I'm definitely a competitive person, I like challenges, and even my major wasn't Culinary, I knew it was going to be a great experience for me.

8. How did it feel to be in this competition? I had so much fun, but at the very moment I should admit I was scared. But as soon as we get into action in the kitchen I was fine. Then waiting to present my dish to the Chefs I was shaking, but I had a depth breath and make it. Almost every other competitor was already a Chef or a recently graduated from the Blue Ribbon Culinary Academy and a couple from the Art Institute. But now looking back, I feel really comfortable because I know I represent my self and the Collin College Culinary Program really well. I'm sure I can do it again.

9. By participating in this event did you learn anything? Every experience is a learning experience. I learned how this type of competition works; I have never been in one before. But I also reassured how much I had learned at school, and how far you can get if you push yourself harder. I feel myself much more confidant right now and know I can do it. I also learn how to face a trio of extraordinary Chefs that honor me making such a good comments about my dish and not be shaking. It was such an extraordinary and fun experience for me.

10. If you are to sell HCSA to aspiring members, what would be your strategy or advice that you will give to students. To all those aspiring members I should say that HCSA is one of the best opportunities you should enjoy. Beside the fact of the great events HCSA coordinates during the year, it's the best networking platform you can have. HCSA is the students, for the students and run by the students but it's not a political platform, it's a whole group of students and professors that have a name already within the field, it's the face for the Hospitality and Culinary Program, and depends on the Members how far the HCSA will get. So take action, step in, if you are a student of the program you should be an HCSA active Member. And trust me, you'll be rewarded in the short and long run. **THANKS HCSA!**

