



BONITA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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NEWS RELEASE

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Bonita Unified ProStart Students, Alumni Plate Success at Culinary Clash Extravaganza

SAN DIMAS/LA VERNE – Bonita Unified ProStart culinary students and alumni continued to make delectable gains during summer break after a successful appearance at the 14th annual California Restaurant Foundation (CRF) Culinary Clash, as they designed gourmet meals while collaborating with industry professionals and making connections.

The Culinary Clash, which raised more than \$95,000 for high school culinary programs at this year's event, pairs ProStart students, who serve as sous chefs, with restaurant executives for a three-month CRF mentorship. Beginning with original ideas brought by the students, teams work to create a dazzling menu item, using certain required ingredients, then plate their creations at a festive outdoor tasting event, where attendees sample and then vote for their favorite student/industry combinations.

All five BUSD students – Bonita High School (BHS) Class of 2025 graduate Charli Padilla, BHS junior Abby Brandler and BHS alum and current Cal Poly Pomona student Jamie Cabrera-Briseno, as well as San Dimas High School (SDHS) senior Kyle Yamate, and SDHS alum and current San Diego State student Sydney Tatevossian – won team awards during the event.

“The Culinary Clash is so much fun. Our students love it,” Bonita High ProStart instructor Laurie Brandler said. “The goal of the ProStart program is to get students experience in all areas of culinary preparation, which includes working with and making connections with industry professionals. This is invaluable experience for our kids, learning from the top minds in the field, and adding their own special touches.”

For Abby Brandler, the daughter of BUSD's ProStart instructors Laurie and Nick Brandler, the Culinary Clash was an invitation for nascent chefs to take their kitchen skills to the next level. Abby teamed with Urban Plates to create Banging Bento Bites, a flank steak filled onigiri with pickled vegetables and creamy Japanese mayo sauce, winning the Marukan Award for employing Marukan rice vinegar.

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“Getting to do this as a high schooler has a huge impact on our lives and paths for the future,” Abby said. “It makes a world of difference and brings together students who have the same passion and drive to achieve the same goals. It inspires friendly competitions while pushing us to connect and bring each other up. I am grateful to the CRF for this opportunity.”

Yamate, a member of San Dimas’ 2025 National ProStart Invitational championship team who will serve as team captain during the 2025-26 school year, partnered with SAVOR restaurant to create a Shumai dumpling and Thai beef salad rich with umami. The team won the Perfect Puree Award for adding the artisan puree to its popping boba, giving the shumai an acidic kick.

“The Culinary Clash has given me such an amazing opportunity, allowing me to work with industry chefs at the Aquarium of the Pacific,” Yamate said. “I am so glad that I was given the chance of a lifetime and very thankful for this wonderful learning experience.”

Padilla, who captained the BHS ProStart culinary team that advanced to the 2024 National ProStart Invitational, teamed with Specialty Restaurants and won two awards: the Team Spirit Award and the Roadie Award. Padilla, who will be attending The Collins College of Hospitality Management at Cal Poly Pomona in the fall, made her third consecutive award-winning appearance at the Culinary Clash.

Tatevossian teamed up with Wedgewood Weddings to create a grilled lamb gyro with an herbed soursop tzatziki that won the Think Culinary Award, while Cabrera-Briseno won the FreshPoint Award after partnering with Lazy Dog Restaurants to make a skirt steak marinated in citrusy yuzu with a splash of Topo Chico.

Bonita and San Dimas ProStart students also served as volunteers for the event, which was held poolside at the Coca-Cola headquarters in Irvine.

PHOTO:

BUSD_CULINARYCLASH1: Current and former Bonita Unified ProStart Culinary Program students are all smiles after participating in the 14th annual California Restaurant Foundation Culinary Clash, where they designed gourmet meals while collaborating with industry professionals and making connections. From left to right are: San Dimas High senior Kyle Yamate, Bonita High junior Abby Brandler, Bonita High alumna Charli Padilla, Bonita High alumna Jamie Cabrera-Briseno, and San Dimas High alumna Sydney Tatevossian.