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## Everyone's a Winner at Kids Can Cook Contest

By Cathy Tyson



Photo courtesy Lisa Evaristo

judges.

A number of parents mentioned there was a fair amount of practicing at home, and that they're ready to try something new for dinner.

At one point there was a noodle emergency - the cooked noodles were sticking together for Loveable Lasagna. The nimble fingers of an adult chef saved the day.

Many of the young chefs seemed excited but quickly settled into the task at hand. Their fellow students came in to check out the proceedings, and quite a few parents were on hand to take pictures. There was an hour and a half time limit to prepare and serve their lunch.

Comments on the finished products ranged from "Crunchy and delectable" to "extra zesty." Although the competition was fierce, students gathered for the judging and gave a big round of applause for all the finalists, who received a reusable tote bag, whisks, kitchen towels, wooden spoons, potholders and a reusable water bottle. Turns out - everyone's a winner.

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With complimentary chef's jackets - sleeve roll up required, hat and rubber gloves - the contest was on. The six finalists, selected from 35 entries, suited up to prepare for the "Kids Can Cook" contest at Burton Valley Elementary School. This year's theme was "healthy lunches." The contest was open to all third through fifth graders, with an equal number of boys and girls submitting entries.

"The kids were challenged to be creative and healthy," said Hot Lunch Coordinator Lisa Evaristo. "It's part of what Sodexo and I are trying to really promote: healthy fresh food. On a personal note, I am just thrilled that these kids are learning to actually cook - not just heat packaged food!" Students had to come up with a recipe, make sure it was nutritious and something their fellow students would actually eat, and able to be reproduced in the school kitchen. The winner will have his or her dish served during April for hot lunch.

With assistance from John Scatena, General Manager of the Schools Division and the Sodexo food service team, trays with pre-chopped vegetables and all the ingredients from their submitted recipes were presented to the students at their respective tables set up in the multipurpose room. Although they were supervised, the kids had to assemble their dish, cook it and serve it to a distinguished panel of