FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Students star in dessert challenge

One of the best things about the end of the academic year is that my grandson Aedan and I get to judge the final projects of the Cabrillo College baking class taught by Anne Baldzikowski. It’s a little like participating in “Chopped” on the Food Network.

Six teams of three students each are given three required ingredients, 10 minutes to plan their baking project, and two hours to go from recipe to completion. That’s quite a challenge! This time, they had to create a dessert that included cocoa powder, walnuts, and cinnamon. Not overly tough. But there was that time constraint.

We had to judge on appearance, color, texture, flavor, and other factors. The six projects included a fritter filled with pastry cream and drizzled with chilli-infused chocolate. Another was a deep chocolate tart topped with walnuts, and another was cinnamon ice cream sitting in a tuille bowl — a very thin, crispy cookie.

We also tasted a chocolate bundt cake with whipped cream rosettes and sugared walnuts; a chocolate mocha layer cake with two kinds of buttercream and a décor of toffee pieces; and a chocolate soufflé cake roll filled with whipped cream and walnuts. We were impressed by the efforts of all these young students just starting their careers.

At the end of the evening, the chocolate mocha cake with toffee was judged the winner. Special prizes went to the team — Evin Salinas, Ana Bueio and Lathonya Fisher. We liked the way the flavors melded but still stood out individually. The cake also held together well when it was sliced, and a bit of whipped cream helped to cut the toffee’s sweetness.

Culinary arts classes are held during the academic year, with several one-day classes in the summer. Whether you’re planning a culinary career or just want to improve your home-based skills, the program offers diploma or certificate training at an affordable tuition. For information, go to cabrillo.edu/academics/cahm/