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finals in mid-July in Chicago.

The 2-1/2 hour contest tests the student's skills in a variety of areas. The first hour tests basics such as how to dice an onion, mince garlic and chop parsley. For the second part, each four-person team must prepare an appetizer or salad, soup, entree and dessert for four people. They will be judged on their skill, technique, creativity and sanitation/cleanliness. Flavor, composition and nutritional balance are some of the elements judges will consider.

Competition

Students competing are enrolled in the Salon Competition Class this term. Aside from the thrill of competing, and chance to win a medal, the competition is an opportunity for learning.

"The students can take the skills they're learning in the classroom and using every day," said Gawronski. "Most of our students work in restaurants. They can refine a dish for compe-

tion. There's a lot of teamwork involved."

Scott Swamba will be competing. "It's a lot of hard work and repetition," he said. "You're always working on the plate to bring it to your standard of perfection."

Swamba and Raukar say competitions also help them keep up with culinary trends and are the source of ideas.

"I go to competition to see what other people are doing and it reminds you of something that you can do for yourself," said Raukar.

Swamba, like Raukar, is happy with the quality of the teaching staff at Schoolcraft. "In the business, people skill skills are important," he said. "Schoolcraft has a very caring staff, they encourage you to strive for excellence. I want to be creative and do food the way I've been taught to do it. The people who graduate, one way or another, come back to thank the chefs."

Typical student

It's hard to define who is a typical culinary arts student at Schoolcraft College. There are currently 140 students enrolled in the full-time program that takes two-and-a-half years to complete. Gawronski said the average student is 29 years old. Some have just graduated from high school or vocational school. Many students have been out in the world working and want to train for a new career or to refine their skills. Some students are retirees who just want to become better cooks or start catering businesses.

The hours are long, and often you have to work weekends and holidays, but a career in culinary arts has its rewards.

"There are people who say their passion has always been food, but they focused on business and realized they hated their job," said Gawronski. "We get a lot of people who were in the medical field. They're coming from a stressful job into a stressful job, but they're doing what they enjoy. No two days are ever the same. It stirs excitement,

you're creating and working with your hands."

After graduating from the program, Schoolcraft culinary arts graduates often get jobs in some of metro Detroit's most popular restaurants such as Five Lakes Grill, the Ritz Carlton and Rocky's.

Gawronski is working on building a network of Schoolcraft culinary arts program graduates to help students find jobs in other parts of the country.

For him, everything he does comes down to basics.

"Nothing we do hasn't been done before, it's the way we do it that's different," he said. "We're limitless with what we can do to food."

Learning the basics

At Schoolcraft, students learn the basics — why foods have to be cooked a certain way and how to pair them. Pork loin can be served with roasted beets, but you have to cook them separately.

"Foods are naturally simple,"

said Gawronski. "We don't need to manipulate or accentuate them. Carrots are naturally sweet, you don't have to add sugar. We are becoming more nutritious conscious. We're trying to stay away from infusion confusion, you confuse the taste buds."

Looking forward, Gawronski is working to maintain the quality level of his staff and the level of understanding of market needs.

"We do a lot of traveling," he said. "We're taking students to Switzerland May 9-20. Chef Leopold Schnell, will be our tour guide. He's from Switzerland and fluent in the language. We'll be visiting three different culinary schools."

Earlier this year, Gawronski visited culinary arts schools in Florida and California. He's going to Las Vegas this week to attend a food educator's conference, and visit Las Vegas Community College, which has a culinary arts program.

"We're avidly seeking what people are doing," said Gawronski.

ki. "Why reinvent the wheel?"

Keeping current also means making equipment purchases that will help students obtain a market edge. The school recently purchased a new smoker, and is considering a new baking oven.

Metro Detroit is an interesting place to be. Among the trends Gawronski sees is more emphasis on vegetables and nutrition. He's also interested in kosher cooking.

Certified Master Chef Dan Hugellor, a culinary arts instructor at Schoolcraft, was a consultant for the newly opened La Difference in West Bloomfield.

Observer & Eccentric Newspaper wine columnist Eleanor Heald describes the menu at La Difference as "rooted in classic French cooking, displayed with American flare, and adhering to all kosher dietary requirements."

"Our diversity warrants us to view these things (such as kosher cooking) more closely," said Gawronski. "Learning about different ethnic groups is part of our knowledge base."

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ate."

The magazine editors liked her idea, and told her to find a nutritionist near her Beverly Hills, Mich., home. She was also told to start a journal of her progress, struggles and feelings. This brutally honest journal is the foundation of her book.

After one failed try to find someone to help, she found Muriel J. Wagner, a Southfield-based registered dietitian who later became an Observer & Eccentric Taste columnist. Her Main Dish Miracle column appears in Taste on the second Sunday of every month.

Wagner helped Fryaby stop

smoking and developed a weight-loss program for her. When Fryaby reached a plateau in 1996 and her weight loss stalled for six months, Richard Simmons stepped in to help Fryaby across the finish line to her goal.

Along the way there have been lots of friends and angels who helped. The Beverly Hills Racquet and Health Club, which is near her home, offered Fryaby and her family a free membership. They also introduced Fryaby to a trainer who helped set-up and oversee a fitness program. Fryaby would later repay the favor by starting

a fitness class at the club WOWS — Work Out With Sandy — for overweight women like herself.

Not everyone was supportive, and some people credited others with her success. "Give me a dietitian and a health club membership and I'll lose weight too," some said. But Fryaby knows it's not that easy. She did the work. "Family Circle" just gave her the tools.

"Slow But Sure" is a book about Prisyby's struggles and triumphs. She explains how she got so heavy and how she got thin. Prisyby is a gutsy lady who shares intimate details about her life including how being so overweight affected her relationship with her husband and other family members and friends.

Each chapter is filled with motivating and inspiring tips to help you successfully reach your weight-loss goals. "Slow But Sure" will also help you say "no" and trim some of the fat from your life — the unnecessary tasks that add up to aggravation, and prevent you from reaching your goals.

Some people were uncomfortable with the new trim Sandy, and she lost friends because of it. "I've heard that some believe I'm not as 'nice' as I used to be. What they are really saying is that I am not available to do the things they want," she writes.

Beauty cream and supplements may help, but good food is the best answer, if you are one of those chronic dieters, a junk food lover, or someone who

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from being dry and flaky. Drink eight glasses of liquid a day. It can be juice, soft drinks, milk, coffee or tea, but the best is just plain water.

The caffeine in coffee, tea and soft drinks may be counterproductive as it can act as a diuretic. If you drink a lot of coffee, tea and soft drinks you may be losing more liquid than you're gaining. Water also helps your body take advantage of all the nutrients it gets from food.

I hope you see a pattern here. Your healthy glow, and looking good, is accomplished by eating a variety of nutrient dense foods such as grains, legumes, fruits and vegetables. Malnutrition has a devastating effect on your skin and impairs any healing your body needs to do. No one wants dry, flaky skin, hair loss and brittle nails, or to look older than you really are.

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Don't forget exercise. People who exercise regularly usually have a healthy glow, they look and feel better.

skips meals, you may want to consider taking a vitamin supplement. Talk to your health care provider before prescribing mega-doses of vitamin supplements for yourself.

Don't forget exercise. People who exercise regularly usually have a healthy glow, they look and feel better. A variety of good food and regular exercise will help you look good.

Lois M. Thielcke of Birmingham is an Extension Home Economist for the Michigan State University Extension — Oakland County. For answers to food questions, call the hot-line (248) 858-0904.

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