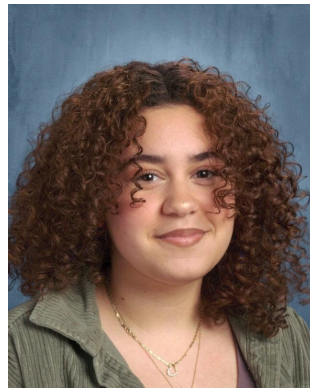https://www.valleybreeze.com/news/davies-students-dessert-featured-at-providence-bakery/article_5de73254-bee0-11ed-b471-8b6b14d958ca.html

Davies student's dessert featured at Providence bakery

By SOFIA BARR Valley Breeze Staff Writer sofia@valleybreeze.com
Mar 16, 2023

Del Carmen Peña

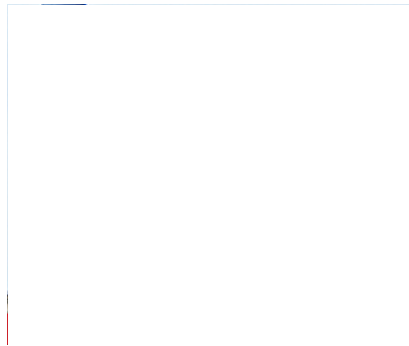Del Carmen Peña

Lifetouch National School Studios Inc.

Amber Del Carmen Peña's white chocolate grapefruit tart.

LINCOLN – Amber Del Carmen Peña, a hospitality careers student at William M. Davies, Jr. Career and Technical High School, has developed a dessert featured at Sin Desserts in Providence.

The dessert Del Carmen Peña created is a white chocolate grapefruit tart, made with a tart shell lined with a sweet strawberry-rosemary sauce, filled with grapefruit curd and topped with a fig leaf-infused white chocolate sage whipped ganache.

Del Carmen Peña, of Woonsocket, is the daughter of Melissa Peña.

She developed the items for the Rhode Island Hospitality Education Foundation's Annual RI ProStart High School Culinary, Foodservice & Hotel Management Competition. Here, Del Carmen Peña and three of her peers competed against other schools in a three-course meal cook-off.

Though she was awarded second place in the competition, Del Carmen Peña's tart sparked the interest of dessert judge and Sin owner Jennifer Luxmoore.

"Amber's dessert was so far ahead of the other teams' desserts, it was amazing. We ate the entire dish. Based on that dish alone, I thought they should have won," said Luxmoore. "For an item that was so far advanced from everyone else, I felt that it should be showcased, so I offered to have the dessert featured at Sin next month."

As for inspiration behind the dish, Del Carmen Peña said the rest of the competition meal and a Greek friend helped her to create the concept.

For the other competition courses, the Davies team served pan-fried sea scallops with a golden and red beet salad over a creamy lemon beetroot yogurt sauce for an appetizer, and parmesan and herb crusted lamb chops with pan fried polenta, sauteed broccoli rabe, diced red pepper and pomegranate red wine sauce for the entree.

"After some research I found that grapefruit and white chocolate went best with lamb," said Del Carmen Peña. "Then my Greek coworker told me fig leaves taste like coconut once they're steeped, so I wanted to test it and incorporate that."

Del Carmen Peña told *The Breeze* that this sweet treat took hours of recipe testing and lots of collaboration to get the taste and presentation perfect.

The competition tart was more delicate and had more components than the pastry that is sold at Sin. Del Carmen Peña worked with Luxmoore to keep the integrity of the flavors and techniques while optimizing the presentation for transporting and casual eating.

"When she said she wanted to serve the dessert at her own bakery, I was like 'that's crazy,'" said Del Carmen Peña, "I was so excited."

Del Carmen Peña said she has enjoyed culinary arts for as long as she can remember; she even had a stool in her kitchen so she could cook and bake when she was too small to reach the counter. "While other kids were watching cartoons, I was watching the Food Network," said Del Carmen Peña.

In 2022, Del Carmen Peña was the SkillsUSA winner for the state of Rhode Island in the Commercial Baking division. She went on to compete at Nationals, where she had to make eight different pastries in about six hours, ultimately placing in the top 10 out of about 40 competitors.

Besides showcasing her specialty dessert at Sin, Del Carmen Peña flexes her baking skills at Little Sister, a restaurant and bakery also in Providence serving Latin American, Puerto Rican and tropical inspired foods.

Del Carmen Peña said she's not sure what the future holds for her, but she does know she would like to travel and bake for more restaurants before opening her own business.

To try Amber Del Carmen Peña's white chocolate grapefruit tart, visit Sin Desserts at 1413 Westminster St. in Providence.