

[Home](#) » [Press Releases](#) »

Rhode Island Students Showcase Culinary Skills, Compete in RIDE's Inaugural Menu for Success Student Food Truck Roundup

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LINCOLN, R.I. -- Rhode Island students showcased their culinary and entrepreneurial skills serving hundreds of hungry guests Saturday at the Rhode Island Department of Education's (RIDE) inaugural **Menu for Success Student Food Truck Roundup**. Held at Lincoln High School, the event featured nine student-operated food trucks and trailers offering a sweet and savory item as they battled it out for the top honors. Serving up a delicious pasta duo – campanelle amatriciana and linguine alfredo alongside fresh pesto focaccia – Coventry Culinary Arts' Oaker Eats food truck wowed the judges, earning the coveted Governor's Cup for best savory dish. Lincoln High School's The Mane Event took home the best sweet dish and the Commissioner's Championship Belt with a decadent strawberry shortcake. Judges included Omar and Eduardo Curi of Los Andes restaurant, Sterling Clinton Spellman and Russell Spellman of Incred-a-Bowl Food Company, and Doris Adesuyi, founder of the Diversity Business Exhibit. The high schools will now work with Los Andes and Incred-a-Bowl to serve dishes inspired by their menu at the restaurants. The savory and sweet adaptations will be unveiled at the Diversity Business Exhibit this September.

"Congratulations to all students and educators who worked hard to prepare for this exciting event and to the school administrators for championing Menu for Success in their district," said **Governor Dan McKee**. "The dedication, creativity, and entrepreneurial spirit within our school communities and at RIDE are truly commendable. We're incredibly proud of all the students who participated and congratulate the winners."

"The Menu for Success Student Food Truck Roundup is not just a competition; the event marks the beginning of an exciting adventure for these budding entrepreneurs," said **Lieutenant Governor Sabina Matos**. "We are so proud to see our MBE Incubator program continuing to deliver for students across the state and look forward to many more years of innovative education and friendly competition."

Participating food trucks and trailers included:

- A Taste of Central Falls, Central Falls High School

- Oaker Eats, Coventry High School
- Davies' Patriots Plates, Davies Career and Technical High School
- Townie Tailgate, East Providence High School
- The Mane Event, Lincoln High School
- Get Right, Shea High School, Pawtucket
- Good Eats and Treats, Providence Career and Technical Academy
- The Highland Grille, Westerly High School
- The Culinary Caravan, Woonsocket High School

"We are immensely proud to kick off the inaugural Menu for Success Student Food Truck Roundup and extend our sincerest appreciation to the students, educators, administrators, community partners, the Town of Lincoln, and RIDE staff who have worked around the clock to make this innovative concept a thriving reality," said **Commissioner Angélica Infante-Green**. "With every dish you serve, Rhode Island's culinary landscape becomes more vibrant and our school communities more impactful. We encourage everyone to visit the food trucks as they serve school and community events and see firsthand the talent and passion our students possess. This program is a great example of our commitment to creating more innovative and engaging learning opportunities for our students."

In 2022, 13 Rhode Island school systems committed to operating food trucks as part of their Culinary Arts or Minority Business Incubator programs : Central Falls, Chariho, Coventry, Cranston, Davies Career and Technical High School, East Providence, Lincoln, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, Warwick, Westerly, and Woonsocket. In 2023, the MET and Exeter-West Greenwich received grants to begin a food truck operation.

The Menu for Success Student Food Truck Roundup was made possible in part by the XQ Institute, the Rhode Island Foundation, Diversity Business Exhibit, as well as the Town of Lincoln, whose volunteers ensured a smooth and successful inaugural event.

"The Town of Lincoln is rich in community spirit and is honored to host the inaugural Menu for Success Student Food Truck Roundup," said **Lincoln Town Administrator Phil Gould**. "I share my gratitude with my partners in Lincoln Public Schools and town staff who have worked collaboratively with RIDE to ensure a successful event. Congratulations to all of the participants on an incredible event highlighting our talented students."

In addition to the culinary experience, high school students took the stage and entertained guests throughout the event. Bands and performers included the Davies Music Club and Lincoln High School's Barrasco performance group and Jake Kambo. Lincoln school leaders extend their gratitude to Cranston Public Schools' Steven Scappaticci for providing equipment and assistance during the event.

While Rhode Island's food sector accounts for tens of thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in sales annually, Rhode Island lags far behind in creating opportunities for people of color to own and operate restaurants. Only 2% of Rhode Island's 14,000 restaurants are owned by people of color. Through industry exposure, RIDE's Menu for Success initiative aims to open doors for students of color and increase

the number of students who graduate with a defined plan for continued success. The program also aligns with RIDE's work to expand access to Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs statewide. Since 2019, RIDE has approved approximately 70 new CTE programs accounting for a 30% increase.

"Having the Diversity Business Exhibit involved as community partners with this initiative has been a rewarding experience," said **Doris Adesuyi, Founder of the Diversity Business Exhibit**. "Seeing the diversity of culture reflected throughout this program on everything from the food truck designs and menus to the student teams and competition judges are all crucial keys to success in entrepreneurship that students are learning about firsthand."

"I appreciate RIDE and the Minority Business Incubator program because experiential learning is what will plant the seeds of success for the students," said **Sterling Clinton Spellman, co-owner of Incred-a-Bowl Food company**.

"Los Andes is incredibly proud to be part of the first Menu for Success Student Food Truck Round Up and celebrate the culinary skills of our students," said **Los Andes owners Cesin, Diego and Omar Curi**. "Allowing students to explore entrepreneurship and get hands-on experience running their own business with a food truck is an innovative approach that will strengthen our state's vibrant culinary scene. Congratulations to all the students and school staff who made this inaugural celebration a success."

View [photos from the event here](#) . Individuals and organizations interested in learning more about the food trucks can visit www.ride.ri.gov/food-trucks.

