

# Culinary students cooking up careers

By **KIERNAN SCHALK**  
Sentinel reporter

For many people it can be a struggle to match their passion with a career in the real world, but two local teenagers may have found a perfect fit.

Amanda Getz, 19, and Benjamin Calhoun, 17, are culinary students at the Mifflin-Juniata Career and Technology Center who are looking forward to pursuing their interests in cooking as far they can go.

For Amanda, it all started during the holidays when she was a young girl helping her grandmother with baking.

"I do a lot of cooking at home with mom and dad," she says.

"Sweet potatoes are my favorite — fried sweet potatoes," Amanda says when talking about what is in season in the winter.

Benjamin leans toward the meticulous art form of a saucier, hovering over the stove preparing a good soup, but he also enjoys working the grill as well.

Amanda, a precocious young lady who has been cooking since she was 11 years old, wants to study at the Keystone Technical Institute in Lingelstown, and Benjamin, a stoic young man, has been accepted into Indiana University of Pennsylvania's culinary



Amanda Getz and Benjamin Calhoun are at the top of their class in the culinary arts program at the Mifflin-Juniata Career and Technology Center.

Sentinel photo by **KIERNAN SCHALK**

program for fall 2012.

Amanda wants to get a business management degree.

"Haven't quite figured out where I want to go, but I know I want to travel,"

Amanda says. She hopes her degree will help her get to wherever she decides to go.

"The Biltmore Estate in North Carolina — it's my dream to work there,"

Benjamin says, referencing George Vanderbilt's sprawling estate that sits on 8,000 acres in the rugged mountains of western North Carolina.

Benjamin says cooking seemed like a good fit for him and a good career move.

Both Benjamin and Amanda have a strong work ethic and have worked or are working in the food industry outside the MJCTC.

Benjamin says the program at the MJCTC has helped prepare him for the next step in his career path. He explains that in the first year of the program, students focus on sanitation and safety, spending a lot of time on proper knife handling skills.

As students get deeper into the program, they begin to focus more on their own personal cooking preferences, sharpening their skills, he says.

All told, Benjamin and Amanda have also put in about 300 volunteer hours helping prepare wedding receptions and galas.

Benjamin says that during a their senior year, students have to prepare an entire meal as part of their final project.

Culinary Arts Instructor Lynn Scar-ton-Fohringer says that out of a class of 37 students, Amanda and Benjamin

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