



Food & Agricultural Products Center

**NEWS RELEASE**

Adding Value to Oklahoma

Contact: Mandy Gross | FAPC Communications | 405-744-0442 | [mandy.gross@okstate.edu](mailto:mandy.gross@okstate.edu)

## ***OKCRA develops new products using fresh ham muscles***

By Mandy Gross, FAPC Communications Services Manager

**(April 21, 2009 Stillwater, Okla.)** The Robert M. Kerr Food & Agricultural Products Center and the Oklahoma State University-Institute of Technology Culinary Arts Program held an invitation-only lunch on April 17 at OSU-IT for food and agricultural industry leaders to taste new and innovative products.

This collaborative partnership between the FAPC and OSU-IT Culinary Arts Program is known as the Oklahoma Culinary Research Alliance, or OKCRA, and helps to advance value-added products from processing to presentation.

“The lunch was a chance for OKCRA to highlight end-use ideas for food items using principles in innovation,” said Andrea Graves, FAPC business planning and marketing specialist and chair of the OKCRA committee. “The alliance was excited to present these new products to key food industry leaders in Oklahoma.”

OKCRA relies on the expertise and resources of the FAPC to identify opportunity areas in the food industry, combined with an innovative, highly specialized culinary arts class at OSU-IT that was developed specifically for the purpose of this collaboration.

“It is the goal of this collaboration to improve existing food products, expand product lines, create new products, exploit the health attributes of these products, and enhance labeling opportunities for Oklahoma,” Graves said.

The lunch was the conclusion of the second project by OKCRA, which focused on the uses of two fresh ham muscles, the pork eye and the pork cap. Last year’s project concentrated on value-added products in the beef industry.

“For this current work, we asked the culinary group to focus on the idea of creating dishes from these cuts that could be applicable in a casual-dining, foodservice application,” said Jake Nelson, FAPC value-added meat processing specialist. “This was a direct result of input we received from Seaboard Foods when they expressed a desire to place fresh ham cuts into the market place. Traditionally, ham muscles from the pork carcass have been routed to either luncheon or deli meats, or into seasonal or festive applications, like a Christmas ham.”

The lunch highlighted the top innovative approaches developed by the culinary class during the spring semester. Not only did the alliance seek input for the current pork project, but also ideas for future projects.

Jason Marsh, OSU-IT Culinary Arts Program faculty member and instructor of the class, said the class developed specifically for the OKCRA project benefits the students and the culinary program greatly.

“The class exposes the students to a more in-depth understanding of a product by learning and seeing where a specific product comes from and how it reacts under different situations,” Marsh said. “It allows them to better understand their role as culinarians on how to prepare a product.”

The OKCRA project also allows people outside of the culinary world to see how the culinary arts program educates the students and the general public about future products, Marsh said.

“The class allows the culinary arts program to create partnerships and outlets for new products to be developed and, in turn, exposes the student to products and companies they are more likely to use in the future after leaving the program.”

David Eaheart, director of marketing for Seaboard Foods, attended the lunch and said he was very impressed with the students and the end products.

“We recently have been talking about how we can add value to under utilized pork cuts,” Eaheart said. “We are proud to partner with the FAPC and OSU-Institute of Technology. The state of Oklahoma has been very good to us.”

Eaheart said the OKCRA project helps Seaboard Foods understand how to package and present these new products to different distributors and foodservice operators.

“Our customers want to know what they can do with the products; so now we can tell them here’s a new cut and here’s what you can do with that cut,” Eaheart said. “This work shows the complete solution with these pork cuts.”

For more information about OKCRA, call Andrea Graves at 405-744-6071 or e-mail [andrea.graves@okstate.edu](mailto:andrea.graves@okstate.edu).

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### **Photo Cut Line**

The Oklahoma Culinary Research Alliance sponsored a lunch to highlight innovative dishes using under utilized pork cuts. Carnitas and bacon-wrapped pork were just a couple of dishes unveiled during the event.