



Food & Agricultural Products Center

**NEWS RELEASE**

*Adding Value to Oklahoma*

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### ***OKCRA to help advance value-added products***

By Mandy Gross, FAPC Communications Services Manager

STILLWATER, Okla. – The Robert M. Kerr Food & Agricultural Products Center, located on the Oklahoma State University – Stillwater campus, is teaming up with the OSU-Okmulgee Culinary Arts Program to help advance value-added products from processing to presentation.

This collaborative partnership between the FAPC and OSU-Okmulgee Culinary Arts Program is known as the Oklahoma Culinary Research Alliance, or OKCRA.

The objective of this relationship is to create and identify end-use ideas for ingredients and food items using principles in innovation, said Andrea Graves, FAPC business planning and marketing specialist and chair of the OKCRA committee.

“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.

OKCRA will rely 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-Okmulgee that was developed specifically for the purpose of this collaboration.

As a function of the academic curriculum associated with OSU-Okmulgee, the initial approach utilizes a one-semester model to achieve the objectives for each project, said Scott Sherrill, OSU-Okmulgee Culinary Arts faculty member and instructor for the newly developed class.

“Our culinary program is constantly looking for opportunities beyond restaurant and hotel kitchens—places where our students can take the basic professional culinary fundamentals we teach and apply them,” Sherrill said. “We believe this alliance broadens the students’ skills and education, as well as the department itself.”

The first project being addressed by OKCRA is the movement from commodities to value-added products in the beef industry. While this movement is welcomed, it is slow and presents challenges with certain beef cuts.

In order to properly evaluate this partnership, OKCRA recently invited a few industry leaders to a luncheon held at the FAPC to showcase the innovative approaches applied to the beef products developed by the students during the first half of the semester.

Heather Buckmaster, executive director for the Oklahoma Beef Council and attendee of the luncheon, said culinary students bring an interesting dynamic to recipe formulation.

“Culinary students often do not have pre-conceived ideas towards new beef cuts, so they bring very open minds towards experimentation,” Buckmaster said. “Merging new product development with culinary initiatives can help propel new products into the marketplace.”

OKCRA also plans to hold a final dinner for agricultural industry leaders at the end of the OSU-Okmulgee semester to highlight the top innovative approaches developed during the entire course of the class. The dinner will be held April 11 at 6:30 p.m. at the State Room on the campus of OSU-Okmulgee.

Not only is the alliance seeking input for the current beef project, but also for future projects.

Mike Schulte, director of marketing for the Oklahoma Wheat Commission and attendee of the luncheon, said he believes OKCRA can benefit Oklahoma greatly and is interested in working with the alliance.

“We find that when it comes to working with food products you can always find new ways to promote items on the dinner plate,” Schulte said. “By having the knowledge and expertise of students that come out of a culinary program like the one at OSU-Okmulgee, it can only benefit our organization when it comes to marketing our food products.”

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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