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Feasting in Spain: UCF Alumna Wins International Tapas Competition

ORLANDO, March 23, 2011 –University of Central Florida December 2010 graduate Holly Storm, placed third in the 6th annual Spain National Tapas Competition in November.

Selected as one of 12 international finalists, Storm represented UCF’s Rosen College of Hospitality Management by traveling to Valladolid, Spain where she competed against students from culinary schools in countries ranging from France and Italy, to Vietnam and Bulgaria.

The trip marked Storm’s first time abroad, and she was accompanied by Rosen College Professor and Certified Executive Chef, Robert Ashley. “Once I learned that I was the winner of the Rosen College competition and would be moving on to the national level in Spain, I was totally thrilled. I immediately ran out and got a passport,” shares Storm.

Her dish was a Chicken Sausage Stuffed Sweetbread and was served with Grand Marnier French toast, pea puree, pomegranate bourbon BBQ sauce, smooth cranberry chutney, maple glaze and sugared pomegranates.

Prior to the event, Storm and Ashley enjoyed Spanish cuisine and culture, but also faced challenges. Ashley describes, “Holly’s main ingredient wasn’t available and the kitchen was almost 75% smaller than what we have in the United States.” Storm managed to persevere, fully utilize available resources and work under the pressure of camera crews and interviewers. “You keep smiling and say ‘Gracias’ a lot,” she shares.

The final stage of the competition took place Nov. 8th to 10th over two separate sessions. Competitors had two hours to create 13 portions of their selected tapas dish. The judging panel was comprised of some of the best chefs in Spain, and many have earned 1, 2 or 3 stars from Michelin guide and are experts in their fields.

Storm recalls the moment she was announced as a winner, “It was totally shocking. I was happy to be there and to place was remarkable.”

The competition coincided with the week-long Tapas Festival, and Storm had the opportunity to participate in workshops and attend chef demonstrations and events throughout the week.

Ashley shares, “From the standpoint of a mentor, I couldn’t have chosen a better candidate. Holly is professional, incredibly bright, intuitive and a true culinarian.”

Storm was honored to represent Rosen College, the only hospitality management program in the competition. “It’s awesome to be a part of Rosen College and Professor Ashley was my support and backbone throughout the whole event. Now, when I interview for jobs, employers want to know more about the competition, so it is definitely opening doors. My advice to students is to take advantage of the potential at Rosen College,” shares Storm.

About UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management

Located in the heart of the tourism and hospitality industry, Orlando, the UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management is dedicated to the values of professionalism, leadership and service. The mission of the Rosen College of Hospitality Management is to develop future generations of global hospitality and tourism leaders representing all industry segments in the hospitality capital of the world, through innovative academic programs, cutting edge research and strong industry and community partnerships.

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